GOBINEAU

SELECTED POLITICAL WRITINGS

Edited and Introduced by

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

Reliable estimates put at about seventy million the figure of those dead through war, revolution and famine in Europe and Russia between 1914 and 1945. To all but a few visionaries and pessimistic thinkers of the nineteenth century the image of such an apocalypse, of a return to barbarism, torture and mass extermination in the heartlands of civilized life, would have seemed a macabre fantasy. Much of the crisis of identity and society that has overshadowed twentieth-century history comes from an impulse towards totalitarian politics. The theory of man as a rational animal, entitled to a wide exercise of political and economic decision, of man as a being equally endowed whatever his race, has been attacked at its religious, moral and philosophic roots. The most 'radical' attack—'radical' in that it demands a total revaluation of man's place in society and of the status of different races in the general scheme of power and human dignity—has come from the Right.

Using the concept of the Fall of Man, of man as an instinctual savage requiring total leadership and repeated blood-letting, a number of elitist, racist and totalitarian dreamers and publicists have offered an alternative statement of the human condition. Fascism, Nazism, the programme of the Falange or the *Croix de Feu*, represent different variants of a related vision. Although this vision is often lunatic and nakedly barbaric, it can provide acute, tragic insights into the myths and taboos that underlie democracy.

Because the political and philosophical programme of

the Right has come so near to destroying our civilization and is so alive still, it must be studied. Hence this series of source-readings in elitist, racist and fascist theory as it was articulated in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and other national communities between the 1860s and the Second World War. These 'black books' fill an almost complete gap in the source material available to any serious student of modern history, psychology, politics and sociology (most of the texts have never been available in English and several have all but disappeared in their original language). But these books also touch on the intractable puzzle of the co-existence in the same mind of profound inhumanity and obvious philosophic and literary importance.

GEORGE STEINER

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EDITORIAL NOTE

For this edition I have arranged the extracts from the *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* under headings which often differ from those of Gobineau's own chapters. The translation of the first twelve sections has been taken from the version of Adrian Collins published by Heinemann in 1915. To this I have made some minor emendations and additions. The last two sections from the *Essay*, together with all the passages concerning 'French Crisis' and 'Global Crisis', have been specially translated for this collection by Mr Brian Nelson, to whom I should like to express my warm appreciation. The extracts from the Gobineau–Tocqueville correspondence, *The Pleiads* and *The Renaissance*, are in my own translation.

For their kind assistance I am most grateful to the following: Dr George Steiner, who suggested that I should undertake this volume; Mr Ed Victor and Mrs Isabel Ross, who have helped guide it to completion; Mrs Elaine Hughes, who typed much of its material; and, not least, my wife who, as a source of help and encouragement at every stage, has shown notable patience both with Gobineau and with his editor.

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INTRODUCTION
HUMAN INEQUALITY AND RACIAL CRISIS

GOBINEAU AND THE RIGHT

Arthur de Gobineau is widely known as the Father of Racism. Although such a belief oversimplifies the origins of an ideology, it is nevertheless proper that this versatile, brilliant but infuriating Frenchman should have a central place in the history of that pernicious brand of political thinking which culminated in the excesses of the Nazi era. This volume of readings from his works aims to illustrate one of the major racist sources of inspiration for the twentieth-century devotees of fascist and elitist ideology and to illuminate surely the most evil of the 'Roots of the Right'.

Ideally we should try at the outset to reach some agreed conclusions about the basic features of this Right. The symposium edited by Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber upon *The European Right* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965) is a bold attempt at treating this problem. Its lack of unity is indication not of neglect by the editors but rather of the immense and perhaps ultimately intractable difficulties of arriving at a really satisfactory conception of the phenomenon. The features of the overall profile there sketched are heavily qualified in detail. In such a context Gobineau and his racism provide further examples of the necessary complexity of the subject.

In so far as the Right may tend to assertions of human inequality and to denials of common humanity and in so far as it opposes socialism and distrusts parliamentary

democracy, then Gobineau is pledged to its support. To the degree that it indulges in elitism, irrationalism and myth, abjuring conventional morality and embracing organic doctrines of society, he is in its ranks. In his conservatism Gobineau must be similarly identified. As Professor Rogger remarks: 'The Right represents not the wave of the future but a nihilistic hostility to modernity, a fear of the unfamiliar, and an infantile yearning for protection ... against dark and only dimly comprehended forces that lurk and threaten on all sides.' That certainly is the Right which Gobineau represents.

Yet this is not the whole story. For where in Gobineau shall we find the militarism and nationalism of the conventional Right, where its frenetic activism and ready resort to force? Where does he display true tough-mindedness and the willingness to convert his denial of equal human rights into a programme of incarceration or extermination for those who do not share fully the virtues of the elite? Indeed, with his stoical resignation to the inexorable ills of the world, is he, even less than the anarchist, the possessor of any political programme at all? And, without one, what is the status of his membership of the Right? Again, he would seem to belie Professor Rogger's assumption that because the Right is devoid of truly revolutionary movement and doctrine it is unlikely to have a 'single and literal-minded dedication to a complex and elaborate view of history and society'. It cannot be too much emphasized that upon those very terms Gobineau is in every feature the emulator of Marx.

The idea of Left and Right is of course the product of an inadequate class-orientated spectrum of political concepts. Though in due course we shall stress certain important connections between the ideas of Class and Race, we must first emphasize simply that racism need have no

stable position in the spectrum of Left and Right that class politics inspires. If racism because of its denial of equality will more often be counted among right-wing ideas, it may still on occasion be the tool of the Left. For example, the most prevalent form of antisemitism in early nineteenth-century France was one embraced by socialists as a means of arousing popular fury against the alleged conspiracies of Jewish bankers. The position of racism, like that of nationalism, on the spectrum of Left and Right is dependent upon time and circumstance. In France, the country of its origin, the spectrum is valuable and its terms are a well-understood part of her political vocabulary. But, because of the variation in time and circumstance, we must make allowance for the differences between that Right with which Gobineau identified himself in his lifetime and that which eventually utilized a perverted form of his theories.

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Having denied that racism must always have an automatic and necessary relationship to the class-orientated conceptions of Left and Right, we must nevertheless see that, in the particular case of Gobineau at least, there is a link between his racial theory and certain class considerations, and that these provide the very foundations for his philosophy. To understand this it is necessary to consider his background.

Gobineau was born in 1816, and the fact that he entered the world on Bastille Day was a lifelong source of annoyance to him since he regarded the French Revolution as anathema. Though he was in fact descended from a line of bourgeois long associated with Bordeaux, various members of the family had already arrogated to themselves the

particle *de* and Arthur himself had no hesitation in adopting the pleasant self-delusion that he was of the French nobility and in identifying himself completely with its interests. Eventually, upon the death of an uncle in 1855, he was bold enough to assume that title of 'Count' which was henceforth associated with him. In reality, the situation of the family was most insecure. His father Louis, having suffered imprisonment under Napoleon for his loyalty to the Bourbons, had been much disappointed by his limited military preferment during the Restoration period. In 1831, the year after the Orleanist accession, family fortunes declined still further as Louis was forced into premature retirement. Until 1830 Arthur himself was educated by a German-trained tutor and his resultant knowledge of German enabled him subsequently to follow the courses at the College of Bienne in Switzerland. There he determined to become an orientalist and man of letters and he convinced his father that he would be unsuited to a military career. Following the breakdown of his parents' marriage he joined his father at Lorient and continued his education there and at Redon.

In 1835 he went to Paris to seek his fortune and, after clerical work with a gas company and in the postal service, he became a journalist and entered fully into the social life of the legitimist salons. His experience of Parisian society convinced him that France, having for the second time rejected the Bourbons, was gripped by a profound mediocrity embodied in the growth of bourgeois power and the rise of revolutionary ideas of liberalism, democracy and socialism. Though in his articles and letters he attacked the Orleanist regime, he was also contemptuous of the cowardice and irresponsibility of the legitimist party itself. A significant aspect of his early career was his meeting and association with Alexis de Tocqueville, which

dates probably from 1843. The distinguished social philosopher engaged Gobineau to assist in the preparation of a historical study of moral attitudes. Although the project was soon abandoned the relevant notes and letters of Gobineau testify to a humanitarian concern and a lively social conscience scarcely discernible in his later work.

The European revolutions of 1848 provide the key to the transformation and mark the consolidation of the conservative emphasis in Gobineau's social and political thinking. With regard to France he was at first horrified by the thought that from the turmoil of events in Paris throughout 1848 there should ultimately emerge a new Bonapartist despotism. Between September 1848 and August 1849, in the pages of the monthly *Revue Provinciale* which he edited jointly with the legitimist publicist Louis de Kergolay, Gobineau made eloquent pleas for greater local liberty against the encroachments of the administrative centralizers of the new republic. During 1849, as he became still more aware that France's greatest need was for authority, his attitude to Louis Napoleon changed. Disillusioned by the feebleness of the legitimists Gobineau saw that his immediate course should be to support the Bonapartist President who for the time being stood as the representative of order.

There was, however, also a strong element of personal interest in Gobineau's decision to support the regime. In the summer of 1849 Tocqueville became Minister of Foreign Affairs, thereby suppressing some of his own distrust for Louis Napoleon. The new Minister invited Gobineau to become his official secretary and, at the age of thirty-three, Tocqueville's former collaborator concealed his scruples and seized this considerable offer of preferment. Tocqueville's gesture testified to the strength of a friendship and intellectual respect which could survive their

serious differences in social philosophy. Though the Minister's tenure was short-lived, Gobineau remained in the service and at the end of 1849 he was sent to the French Legation in Berne, where he quickly acquired a loathing for the corruption, mediocrity and materialism of democratic Switzerland. Thus he began the varied diplomatic career that was to last for nearly thirty years.

During that time, as the official of three regimes, he was to remain critical of France and her degenerate governors. His loyalty was never more than provisional and was motivated more by the need to earn a living than by any deeper conviction as to the wisdom of the policies pursued.

But other convictions there were. And by 1850 Gobineau had decided to write of his fears for the future of a France and a Europe that were rapidly rejecting true nobility and were conveying power into the irresponsible hands of the middle and lower classes in the name of democracy, liberalism and socialism. It was in such an atmosphere that he wrote the *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, a vast work which in its turgidity reveals the speed and panic of its composition. The book was impregnated with a profound social pessimism which had been acquired in his early years and confirmed by his experience of 1848 and which was, in essence, a product of class-consciousness.

THE INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

Yet, under what influences did this brand of pessimism come to be expressed in racial form? In the first place, the history of the French nation had been discussed often before in terms of links between Race and Class. The ancient rivalries of Gauls, Romans and Franks – all readily endowed with racial vices and virtues – and the

relationship between their conflicts and the class structure of contemporary France had long been central themes of French historiography. Such an ethnic interpretation is hinted in the accounts of Caesar and Tacitus but the theme was certainly developed explicitly from the sixteenth century onwards. In the eighteenth century Henri de Boulainviller provided the classic exposition of the aristocratic version of this argument. He maintained that the Franks, having conquered the Roman rulers of the already vanquished Gauls, had come to form the French nobility and to hold their property and superior position by right of conquest. At the Revolution the Abbé Sieyès had been happy to stand Boulainviller on his head by maintaining that the recent triumph of the oppressed masses was the hitherto delayed manifestation of their Gallic superiority over the Frankish aristocracy. In the early nineteenth century such popular historians as Augustin Thierry continued to make the association of Class and Race. It was therefore scarcely surprising that Gobineau, the self-styled aristocrat viewing the nobility under siege, found inspiration in these sources of racial historiography and drew on Boulainviller in particular.

There were other more generalized influences. The Romantic Movement manifested increasing concern with the primitive origins and purity of peoples as embodied in myth, saga and legend. There was also a renaissance of interest in the Orient that prompted Gobineau's generation to draw comparisons and contrasts between the civilizations of East and West. When Michelet considered India he was confirmed in his conviction as to the identity of all mankind. For men such as Gobineau these wider horizons testified primarily to the differences and inequalities among men. Orientalism, in its philological form, made a further and specific contribution to that

branch of race thinking which concerned the putative triumphs and virtues of an Aryan race. After Sir William Jones had established in the 1780s a connection between the Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Persian, Celtic and Germanic languages and their common indebtedness to an 'Aryan' mother tongue, it was a short (though illogical) step to the supposition that a single race must correspond to this linguistic family. Thus the Aryan and his myth were born, and it was not long before scholars were devoting lengthy theses to the discussion of his birthplace, his migrations and settlements, and his triumphs and culture-bearing activities throughout history. Such learned endeavours were especially popular in Germany where the romantics gave the idea eloquent expression in the form of Aryan-Teutonism.

These speculations on the Aryans were closely connected with more general attempts at classifying mankind in relation to the natural order. From the late eighteenth century the sciences of anthropology, ethnology and pre-historical archaeology, aided by zoology and geology, devoted much of their energy to divining the racial groupings of man. One of Gobineau's boldest pretensions was indeed that of synthesizing all their discoveries with those of more conventional history, and this was one of the major objectives of the *Essay*.

This work, published in four volumes between 1853 and 1855, owes much to the intellectual context of that period which the cultural historian Jacques Barzun has characterized as the age of Darwin, Marx and Wagner. Racism, with its concern for the physical aspects of man, was a natural part of the environment of speculation which culminated in 1859 with the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Between Wagner and Gobineau there was later a personal friendship but, even in 1850, the composer

was not only already inspired by the Teutonic past but had also asserted that Race was the key to artistic creation and had produced his antisemitic polemic *Judaism in Music* to explain certain aspects of cultural degradation.

Like Marx, Gobineau had become obsessed with deterministic historical explanation in terms of a single idea. What class conflict was to one the mixture of races had become to the other – the fundamental key to social interpretation. Again we see connections between Race and Class, here associated in their identical function as secular symbols of group loyalty in an age when political theory had lost almost completely its earlier role as the servant of the city state or of the Church or of a dynasty. The major works of Marx and Gobineau, directing loyalty to Class on the one hand and Race on the other, are in essence responses to the same crisis – that of alienation from the social, economic and cultural state of contemporary Europe. But the detailed causes of their resentment and the content of their responses certainly differ. By 1850 Gobineau had come to associate urbanization and industrialization not only with ideas of materialism, equality, democracy and socialism, but also with a growing cosmopolitanism and movement towards human unity encouraged by miscegenation. The rejection of such ideas is part of his hostility to what Oswald Spengler came to call 'Megalopolis', the devouring world-city. This embodies the destruction of classes and states – indeed of all conventional social and political barriers. But what to Marx was an ideal was to Gobineau a prospect of unmitigated disaster. For Marx such destruction was the necessary precondition of true social harmony. But Gobineau, throughout his search for social order and the true freedom which a racial elite alone could appreciate, maintained, like Shakespeare's Ulysses and like those who adhered to the

idea of a Great Chain of Being, that such harmony was possible only through the preservation of degree and hierarchy. The caste system of the Brahmins, not the classless society of Marx, was to him harmonious.

Gobineau has in common with many later racists this concern with the defence of social status and economic interest. He experienced a significant disjunction between desire and gratification, between his present moderate existence and his assessment of the previous situation of his class and family. It was within this context that Gobineau suffered from the humiliation of non-recognition. He experienced a form of bastardization complex – combining pride in himself in defiance of accepted values with the desire for conventional legitimation and recognition. Such a complex is especially relevant to a justification in terms of race, since this is necessarily connected with denouncing blood-mixture, regarded literally or figuratively, as the outcome of illicit or undesirable union. Although he never formulated his position in these precise terms, Gobineau strove, in a society that progressively refused recognition to himself and his caste, for self-legitimation by stressing that it was not he but the bulk of his contemporaries who were debased. This is the essence of the class-consciousness which Gobineau came to express in racist form.

THE NATURE OF THE SELECTIONS

After this account of the social and intellectual background to Gobineau's *Essay* the reader may question why the selections presented here contain no material from that earlier period. One answer is that the productions of the 1840s – the relevant fragments of letters and the ephemeral articles, together with the intractable novels and the dull versifying in which he also indulged – do not lend them-

selves to coherent presentation. But, coherent or not, had they provided any inspiration connected with the roots of the Right, some attempt at selective inclusion would have been made. The really fundamental reply is one that involves general consideration of the criteria we have employed in preparing these selections from the vast corpus of Gobineau's writings.

The primary purpose has been to present extracts which illuminate the nature of racism as a mode of political thinking, and emphasis has been placed upon the *Essay* as a work which was directly influential upon later racist theorizing. In this context we should remember the general truth of André Gide's remark that 'An author is known only for a single product of his mind, to which the laziness of his public conveniently reduces all his complexity.' Such a product was the *Essay*; such a fate was Gobineau's. Having in mind for our present purpose the primary importance of his posthumous uses, an edition such as this can have no pretensions to drawing a rounded picture of Gobineau himself – as diplomat, journalist, orientalist, poet or novelist. In recent years these aspects of his work have been receiving greater critical attention. In particular, his reputation as a fascinating minor figure of nineteenth-century French literature is now firmly established. For a further understanding of Gobineau himself, in all his complexity, the reader is referred to the Bibliographical Notes at the end of this volume where the scope of his other writings is indicated and where there are recommendations for further readings from Gobineau and from his commentators in various fields.

The majority of extracts presented here either have been totally unavailable hitherto in English (*viz.* all the passages concerning 'French Crisis' and 'Global Crisis') or else have been, like the *Essay*, long out of print. Their central aim is

to illustrate that part of Gobineau which is of immediate importance to students of history and political theory. For them this volume provides certain texts essential to any proper study of the European Right.

THE FEATURES OF GOBINEAU'S RACISM

These selections are organized around the dual themes of Inequality and Crisis. They are crucial, recurrent and interrelated not only in Gobineau's political and social thinking but also in any form of racist philosophy. Gobineau was, by modern standards, grossly unfair to the arguments for egalitarianism. But, in a negative respect, he was in his own time justified in taking to task those proponents of human equality who continued to see their arguments as socially descriptive rather than morally exhortatory. The late eighteenth century, marked by famous pronouncements of human equality, had also been a time when it was realized that, for descriptive purposes, inequality was no less demonstrable or relevant. It was seen that as premises for social theory equality and inequality were of identical philosophical status. Perhaps one of the few therapeutically useful functions of arguments such as Gobineau's was that of forcing more liberal thinkers away from any description of the equality of men in racial or other terms and towards basing their claims rather upon moral exhortation stemming from a vision of mankind equal essentially in its common humanity.

Gobineau's philosophy of history is founded on the belief that there are innate inequalities among the races of men. He devotes much versatility and many a convoluted argument to the hoary topic of Genesis and the unity or multiplicity of the original human Creation. In effect, conveniently ignoring primal man as beyond the reach of

our knowledge, he settles for an emphasis upon the physical differences – and the intellectual and cultural inequalities illogically deduced therefrom – among all men that have been known to history. But in his discussion of this 'Separation of Races' inconsistency abounds. Perhaps most flagrantly of all he regards the 'Hamite', one of the basic types alleged as knowable, sometimes as essentially negroid and sometimes as not.

The fundamental racist doctrine of the *Essay* was voiced by Gobineau in his Dedication: 'I was gradually penetrated by the conviction that the racial question overshadows all other problems of history, that it holds the key to them all, and that the inequality of the races from whose fusion a people is formed is enough to explain the whole course of its destiny ... I convinced myself at last that everything great, noble and fruitful in the works of man on this earth, in science, art and civilization, derives from a single starting-point, is the development of a single germ and the result of a single thought; it belongs to one family alone, the different branches of which have reigned in all the civilized countries of the universe.' These were sentiments which were eventually echoed in almost identical terms in *Mein Kampf*. Both there and in the *Essay*, despite the occasional pious references to the divine hand, it is racial dynamics which control human destiny. Long before Spengler and Toynbee, Gobineau saw historical movement in terms of the cyclical rise and fall of those quasi-organic civilizations which he lists at the conclusion of the first Book of the *Essay*. Yet his account of their development does not amount to any simple plea for blood-purity. The tragic element of Nemesis in his historical drama is that civilization can be created only by a combination of Aryan with alien blood. Thus the mixture of blood is both the life-giver and the death-bringer to civilization, and

death is inherent in life. Alienated from the modern world and appalled by the sheer human fluidity of its migrations and social mobility, Gobineau was convinced that, after centuries of the miscegenation which led to the debasement of the higher stocks, civilization had reached its ultimate crisis. What makes him almost unique among race theorists is his total paralysis of response to that crisis.

In so far as the paralysis is firstly a moral one Gobineau is not outstandingly different from other racists, all of whom must finally fail to reconcile the conflict between historical determinism and free will. Some racists, in completely denying the humanity of certain portions of mankind, thereby deny these groups any capacity for moral judgment. Gobineau, it is true, never attains the extremes of depersonalization and dehumanization finally reached by the Nazis in their death camps. In the *Essay* he is prompt to castigate, for instance, the total lack of human consideration given by the now debased Anglo-Saxons of North America to the Negroes and indigenous Indians whom they persecute. He affirms explicitly that even the lowest of mankind have elements of conscience and judgment which mark them off decisively from the beast. On the other hand, Gobineau does suggest that in its levels of innate capacity for development and improvement mankind shows immense variation. And here, like the Nazis, he indulges in the crudest typologies of human groupings. Even if he avoids the ultimate in depersonalization he can still declare that 'I will not discuss the moral and intellectual worth of individuals taken one by one.' Such an anti-individualistic approach considers morality and intellect not as personal matters but within the context of race alone, establishing a hierarchy of group typologies within each of which the myriad human variations are

annihilated. The ethical superiority of the white peoples is based upon tautology, being implicit in the very definition. In Gobineau's account man is unable to change the essence which controls the actions susceptible to moral judgment, and his theory eliminates any proper notion of individual responsibility. Such a race theory is in implication morally totalitarian, leading to the annihilation of all other value-systems and of traditional religious morality in particular. Gobineau develops instead an ethic of predestination and justification by blood which takes man beyond all conventional ideas of good and evil. In the extracts from *The Pleiads* and *The Renaissance* all these facets of his philosophy, and of race thinking generally, are further strikingly epitomized.

Gobineau's virtual uniqueness among racists stems, however, from the fact that to this moral paralysis there is added a paralysis of political exhortation. The exchanges presented here from his correspondence with Tocqueville vividly illustrate the horrific conjunction between his ethical nihilism and his total lack of pragmatic concern. In the Conclusion of the *Essay* Gobineau reveals his relentlessly pessimistic prognosis. The Aryan blood, now almost exhausted, is no longer capable of continuing its task of creating civilizations. Mediocrity and decay abound. Reliant upon the reification of his physical metaphors, Gobineau sees in the organism that is civilization a corruption and degeneration beyond all cure. His hatred of human migrations and intermixture often seems to approach a plea for social stagnation, even perhaps for the abolition of social life itself. Long before the threat of universal racial confrontation was obvious, at a time when racial rivalries were not primarily those of colour and still three-quarters of a century before the term 'racism' was coined, Gobineau turned towards the yellow hordes in the

East and vividly depicted his view of the unavoidable crisis of the West. Beyond the most temporary and ineffectual makeshifts, beyond a flight from the world into stoicism by the few men of worth remaining, Gobineau has no political programme of racial and cultural regeneration to offer. Like Gibbon amidst the ruins of the Capitol, Gobineau begins his great work pondering upon the decline and fall of civilizations. Unlike Gibbon, there alone his thoughts remain.

PESSIMISM AND GOBINISM

Gobineau's intellectual biography from the time of the *Essay* until his death in 1882 is essentially the story of pessimism confirmed. His conclusions about universal history had been formed upon a narrow basis of personal experience limited to the societies of France, Switzerland and some of the German states. But subsequently, in the course of a diplomatic career that lasted until his prematurely enforced retirement in 1877, he was to widen his knowledge of decay, tending to adapt his observations to the theories already enunciated in the *Essay*. When its latter two volumes appeared in 1855 Gobineau's diplomatic duties had already called him to Teheran. His subsequent appointments included a second posting to Persia, a visit to Newfoundland, and positions as Minister in Athens, Rio de Janeiro and Stockholm.

The course of political events had further encouraged his dogmatism over inequality and his pessimism as to crisis. In 1870–71, on leave from Rio, he found himself in France observing at first hand the disasters of the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. His views on the defeat, on the early years of the Third Republic and on the aggravation of French crisis are exemplified in the present

volume by extracts from the relevant polemical essays of the 1870s, unpublished in his lifetime. They repeat the expression of the original prejudices against equality and fraternity which, thirty years before, had driven him into alienation and then inspired the *Essay*. The final selections on 'Global Crisis' have been chosen to indicate the continuance, confirmation and aggravation of Gobineau's pessimistic view of the racial destruction of civilization.

His own life seemed a tale of frustration. Despite the many testimonies of contemporaries to his personal charm, his marriage – like that of his parents – was a failure and ended in separation. In his own time his writings received less recognition than he desired. He maintained the flattering belief that only through betrayal by his learned acquaintances had he lost the chance of a seat in the French Academy. He was also convinced – this time with some reason – that personal hostilities within the French diplomatic corps prevented him from obtaining a major post as Ambassador. His official reporting upon the world about him had managed, despite all the shackles of protocol and convention, to reveal a candour and verve which rendered him a liability to his more prudent superiors. Diplomacy eventually became simply a means of earning a living and of meeting the extravagances of his feckless wife. He survived for five years beyond retirement, continuing his obituary of the Western world. He was inclined neither to enter political life nor to dispense theoretical nostrums. He died in Turin – in voluntary exile.

Between the pessimism of Gobineau and the regenerative optimism of those who, in preaching 'Gobinism', came to make use of his doctrines there is of course a vast gulf. But it is not altogether unbridgeable. Though in his own lifetime Gobineau's *Essay* met with negligible success, the history of Gobinism proper does begin in his very last

years. It was his friendship with Richard Wagner, dating from 1876, that proved decisive, for Gobineau and Gobinism first reached fame and infamy as part of the Wagnerian movement. The Master had found in Gobineau's views on ethnic chaos a systematic treatment of elements in his own theory of cultural decay, but, unlike the Frenchman, he complemented these with ideas of regeneration. After the death of the two men within months of each other, the Bayreuth circle continued to cultivate the memory of Gobineau and a more optimistic version of his ideas. Into Gobinism was infused an anti-Jewish element that had not been prominent in the *Essay*. Modern Germans conveniently forgot that its praise was not for themselves but for the Teutons who had emerged from fifth-century forests before losing their identity and their vigour somewhere in the Middle Ages. They neglected Gobineau's assaults upon vulgar nationalism and upon the imperialistic expansion which so encouraged blood-mixture. Despite his disavowal of any regenerative programme, least of all the sort that would in fact only hasten miscegenation, his name became posthumously linked with ideas of Pan-Germanic expansion. By the time that the Gobineau Society was founded in 1894 its hero's work had suffered a not too subtle metamorphosis. In that new form it was to provide inspiration for such twentieth-century magicians of the Myth of Blood as Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Alfred Rosenberg and Adolf Hitler himself. In the Führer's Reich the *Essay*, suitably adjusted, became a popular school reader. Whatever lack of explicit acknowledgment Gobineau may have received, over and over again in the political literature of Nazism there are phrases and conceptions profoundly echoing his work of the 1850s. Above all, there is in the *mode* of thinking every similarity. Despite all the optimism, all the activism, all the

messianism so foreign to Gobineau, such a link could not be concealed.

Just as Hegel might not have recognized much of Hegelianism, or Marx much of Marxism, so Gobineau might fairly have denied the accuracy of much that was preached in his name. His writings are a major root of the Right not so much on account of their detailed content as because of the mode of thinking that they embody. In content the doctrines of European racism – such as Celticism, Slavism, Teutonism and Anglo-Saxonism – have revealed great variety. But in the mode of thought, in the endless repetition of the same errors of method, their similarities have been equally marked. To all of them may be applied John Stuart Mill's retort that 'Of all vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences.' The later progress of both genetic and sociological knowledge has done nothing to invalidate Mill's fundamental contention that human differences are due to a much more complex interaction of hereditary and environmental factors than racists allow. In September 1967 a UNESCO Statement on Race, prepared by an international panel of leading biologists, geneticists, physical anthropologists and sociologists, declared that 'Current biological knowledge does not permit us to impute cultural achievements to differences in genetic potential.' Many contemporary geneticists indeed cast doubt upon the validity of viewing races as discrete units, and seriously question the whole practice of racial classification itself. Yet the fundamental objection to the political ideas of racism must always be moral rather than scientific. Could any biological revolution justify to us a mode of thinking which, like Gobineau's, denies us the

right to judge human beings essentially as individuals?

It is true that, in some senses, Gobineau's *Essay* is not so much a 'black book' as one that was blackened by distortions through time. But in, for instance, his illogicality, his inconsistency, his tendency to moral nihilism and racial determinism, he left negligently so many hostages to fortune that he has less of a defence than some against the charges upon which he is indicted for the posthumous uses of his work. With the premise of equal human rights and dignity once denied, with that of racial inequality once accepted, a perilous journey begins and it is a foolish man who believes that it will be easy to halt short of the horrific terminus. For racism is too much a matter of absolutes. Eventually it must destroy all those who, like Gobineau, strive for an element of benevolence, because in benevolence there is compromise. Eventually racism must pose directly the uncompromising question as to who shall be killer and who victim – the ultimate political question beyond which further questions, even if they exist, are certainly not political in nature.

THE RELEVANCE OF RACIAL CRISIS

Gobineau's prediction of 1855 that humanity would survive upon this planet for a mere four or five millennia more was the product of his pessimism. It is tragic that we in the nuclear age would surely regard such an estimate today as wildly optimistic. Yet Gobineau's concern was not with the extinction alone. As he wrote at the very end of the *Essay*, 'What is truly sad is not death itself but the certainty of our meeting it as degraded beings.' He had in mind, of course, the degradation of a humanity levelled into mediocrity by blood-mixture. Are we today more likely to have in mind as degrading, to depriver and deprived alike,

the denial of common human rights and dignity? There are fortunately many in our time who, whatever their views as to the likelihood of human extinction, do not wish to meet it degraded in that latter sense, so far removed from Gobineau's. Though the nuclear instrument which threatens extinction is not one that he could have foreseen, the racial crisis which he did predict, in principle and even in much of its detail, is increasingly the chief symptom of the sort of human degradation produced by assertions of human inequality. Indeed, could that very degradation be yet the stimulus for the extinction itself?

Today the racial and economic divisions of the world coincide to an important degree. The social and economic deprivation of the Third World and its consequent jealousy and hostility remind us of the alienation from which Gobineau himself suffered. He was perhaps wrong in concentrating too exclusively upon miscegenation as the danger. But he saw astutely that increasing contact in some form might aggravate racial rivalries. It is not the poverty of Africa and Asia which is new; what is novel is the awareness on those continents that it is in the power of the white world to cure it, that the white races are not striving sufficiently hard to do so, and that they continue to dominate world resources. That awareness has stemmed from a version of the contact and communication that Gobineau feared.

It would be dangerously wrong to suppose that European race feeling and race thinking are dead. The Nazi experience undoubtedly brought an emotional revulsion against them – but it is one that may easily be disregarded under the threat from the coloured hordes of Africa and Asia. It would be wrong to suppose that a mode of thinking which flourished in the age of European world domination cannot survive in the period of comparative decline. Indeed,

it is this very decline, and the prospect of its continuance as Afro-Asia takes a larger position in the world, that may create the environment for renewed European racism. In that context no amount of refutation by biologists and geneticists can guarantee against the possibility of the phoenix-like re-emergence of such a potent political myth. The post-war neo-fascists have not hesitated to purvey doctrines of Pan-Europeanism as a response to the crisis of colour confrontation. We must beware the complacent view that racism stands outside the mainstream of the Western tradition of political thought and that, being an aberration into foreign fields, it is unlikely to regain its influence. Unfortunately, in its intolerance, its denial of human dignity, its moral authoritarianism, and in much else, it is a very real part of any tradition that we have. In his convictions as to the coloured peril, in his expressions of fear, in his alienation, Gobineau can still strike sympathetic chords in the hearts of many of our contemporaries. Racism is a bogus mode of thought, but one which retains a certain cheap plausibility, particularly when the coloured peoples are developing their own ideas of racial supremacy. The fear of Western decline, central to Gobineau's thinking, is in the great tradition of European continental paranoia. Today the potential enemy for his successors is not Islam, nor even the Jews, but is regarded as being the Afro-Asian world, the bulk of whose states agree upon denouncing the West over racial issues, if upon little else.

Despite his originality and his remarkable prescience as to the kind of issue which would increasingly dominate world affairs, Gobineau's mode of thinking would have vitiated any advice that he might have given. In the event, he himself felt simply unable to offer any political wisdom for improving the situation. It is a sobering thought that

he would probably have dismissed our quest for more positive and purposeful ideas and actions with the rebuke that it is an elementary error to suppose that every social and political problem must be automatically susceptible to some kind of effective solution. It would certainly be dangerous for us to agree with the view that the racial problems of the modern world are already beyond solution. But, as they loom even larger, it would be no less perilous to believe that they will cure themselves without our commitment to their solution or that they will be cured by racist theories.

Despite all his errors of analysis and method, it is unfortunately necessary to admit that, as the situation worsens year by year, Gobineau's conclusions, at least, take on renewed significance. How much longer shall we be able to maintain that he was wrong in seeing racial crisis as an insoluble problem? For the present, even while striving to find solutions, it seems wise to recognize reluctantly that there is no aspect of social and political affairs more deserving of some of the pessimism which marked Gobineau's thought than that which concerns the races of the world, their growing rivalries and conflicts. This is the sense in which present trends may yet bear out his remark that 'I shall only come to be appreciated a hundred years after my death.'

MICHAEL D. BIDDISS

A · RACIAL INEQUALITY

ESSAY ON THE INEQUALITY OF THE HUMAN RACES (1853–5)

The first two volumes of Gobineau's most famous work and of his most complete statement of racial inequality appeared in 1853 and were followed by two further volumes in 1855. The whole study is divided into six Books. The first twelve sections of the present selection are taken from Book One which Gobineau planned as the essential theoretical introduction to the lengthy historical exposition which forms the bulk of the work.

1. DEDICATION

TO HIS MAJESTY GEORGE V, KING OF HANOVER

The great events – the bloody wars, the revolutions and the breaking up of laws -- which have been rife for so many years in the states of Europe, are apt to turn men's minds to the study of political problems. While the vulgar consider merely immediate results, and heap all their praise and blame on the little electric spark that marks the contact with their own interests, the more serious thinker will seek to discover the hidden causes of these terrible upheavals. He will descend, lamp in hand, by the obscure

paths of philosophy and history; and in the analysis of the human heart or the careful search among the annals of the past he will try to gain the master-key to the enigma which has so long baffled the imagination of man.

Like everyone else, I have felt all the prickings of curiosity to which our restless modern world gives rise. But when I tried to study, as completely as I could, the forces underlying this world, I found the horizon of my inquiry growing wider and wider. I had to push further and further into the past, and, forced by analogy almost in spite of myself, to lift my eyes further and further into the future. It seemed that I should aspire to know not merely the immediate causes of the plagues that are supposed to chasten us, but also to trace the more remote reasons for those social evils which the most meagre knowledge of history will show to have prevailed, in exactly the same form, among all the nations that ever lived, as well as those which survive today – evils that in all likelihood will exist among nations yet unborn.

Further, the present age, I thought, offered peculiar facilities for such an inquiry. While its very restlessness urges us on to a kind of historical chemistry, it also makes our labours easier. The thick mists, the profound darkness that from time immemorial veiled the beginnings of civilizations different from our own, now lift and dissolve under the sun of science. An analytic method of marvellous delicacy has made a Rome, unknown to Livy, rise before us under the hands of Niebuhr, and has unravelled for us the truths that lay hid among the legendary tales of early Greece. In another quarter of the world, the Germanic peoples, so long misunderstood, appear to us now as great and majestic as they were thought barbarous by the writers of the Later Empire. Egypt opens its subterranean tombs, translates its hieroglyphs, and reveals the age of its pyra-

mids. Assyria lays bare its palaces with their endless inscriptions, which had till yesterday been buried beneath their own ruins. The Iran of Zoroaster has held no secrets from the searching eyes of Burnouf, and the Vedas of early India take us back to events not far from the dawn of creation. From all these conquests together, so important in themselves, we gain a larger and truer understanding of Homer, Herodotus, and especially of the first chapters of the Bible, that deep well of truth, whose riches we can only begin to appreciate when we go down into it with a fully enlightened mind.

These sudden and unexpected discoveries are naturally not always beyond the reach of criticism. They are far from giving us complete lists of dynasties, or an unbroken sequence of reigns and events. In spite, however, of the fragmentary nature of their results, many of them are admirable for my present purpose, and far more fruitful than the most accurate chronological tables would be. I welcome, most of all, the revelation of manners and customs, of the very portraits and costumes of vanished peoples. We know the condition of their art. Their whole life, public and private, physical and moral, is unrolled before us, and it becomes possible to reconstruct, with the aid of the most authentic materials, that which constitutes the personality of races and mainly determines their value.

With such a treasury of knowledge, new or newly understood, to draw upon, no one can claim any longer to explain the complicated play of social forces, the causes of the rise and decay of nations, in the light of the purely abstract and hypothetical arguments supplied by a sceptical philosophy. Since we have now an abundance of positive facts crowding upon us from all sides, rising from every sepulchre, and lying ready to every seeker's hand, we may no longer, like the theorists of the Revolution, form a

collection of imaginary beings out of clouds, and amuse ourselves by moving these chimeras about like marionettes, in a political environment manufactured to suit them. The reality is now too pressing, too well known; and it forbids games like these, which are always unseasonable, and sometimes impious. There is only one tribunal competent to decide rationally upon the general characteristics of man, and that is history – a severe judge, I confess, and one to whom we may well fear to appeal in an age so wretched as our own.

Not that the past is itself without stain. It includes everything, and so may well have many faults, and more than one shameful dereliction of duty, to confess. The men of today might even be justified in flourishing in its face some new merits of their own. But suppose, as an answer to their charges, that the past suddenly called up the gigantic shades of the heroic ages, what would they say then? If it reproached them with having compromised the names of religious faith, political honour and moral duty, what would they answer? If it told them that they are no longer fit for anything but to work out the knowledge of which the principles had already been recognized and laid down by itself; that the virtue of the ancients has become a laughing-stock, that energy has passed from man to steam, that the light of poetry is out, that its great prophets are no more, and that what men call their interests are confined to the most pitiful tasks of daily life; – how could they defend themselves?

They could merely reply that not every beautiful thing is dead which has been swallowed up in silence; it may be only sleeping. All ages, they might say, have beheld periods of transition, when life grapples with suffering and in the end arises victorious and splendid. Just as Chaldaea in its dotage was succeeded by the young and vigorous

Persia, tottering Greece by virile Rome, and the degenerate rule of Augustulus by the kingdoms of the noble Teutonic princes, so the races of modern times will regain their lost youth.

This was a hope I myself cherished for a brief moment, and I should like to have at once flung back in the teeth of History its accusations and gloomy forebodings, had I not been suddenly struck with the devastating thought, that in my hurry I was putting forward something that was absolutely without proof. I began to look about for proofs, and so, in my sympathy for the living, was more and more driven to plumb to their depths the secrets of the dead.

Then, passing from one induction to another, I was gradually penetrated by the conviction that the racial question overshadows all other problems of history, that it holds the key to them all, and that the inequality of the races from whose fusion a people is formed is enough to explain the whole course of its destiny. Everyone must have had some inkling of this colossal truth, for everyone must have seen how certain agglomerations of men have descended on some country, and utterly transformed its way of life; how they have shown themselves able to strike out a new vein of activity where, before their coming, all had been sunk in torpor. Thus, to take an example, a new era of power was opened for Great Britain by the Anglo-Saxon invasion, thanks to a decree of Providence, which by sending to this island some of the peoples governed by the sword of Your Majesty's illustrious ancestors, was to bring two branches of the same nation under the sceptre of a single house – a house that can trace its glorious title to the dim sources of the heroic nation itself.

Recognizing that both strong and weak races exist, I preferred to examine the former, to analyse their qualities, and especially to follow them back to their origins. By this

method I convinced myself at last that everything great, noble and fruitful in the works of man on this earth, in science, art and civilization, derives from a single starting-point, is the development of a single germ and the result of a single thought; it belongs to one family alone, the different branches of which have reigned in all the civilized countries of the universe.

The present work, which I now lay humbly at the feet of Your Majesty, embodies an account of this thesis. I have not thought it fitting to forsake the elevated and pure spheres of scientific discussion in order to descend to the level of contemporary polemic. I have not sought to shed light upon what the future holds, either for tomorrow or for the years to come. The periods I cover are vast and broad. My researches begin with the first people that existed and continue even as far as those which are yet to come. My calculations are in terms of centuries. I am creating, in short, a work of moral geology. I rarely mention man and still more rarely do I talk of him as citizen or subject. Often, indeed always, I am speaking of different ethnic groupings. For, at the level I have adopted, I am concerned neither with the accidents of nationality nor even with the existence of states, but rather with the diversity of races, societies and civilizations.

2. THE DISEASE OF CIVILIZATIONS

The fall of civilizations is the most striking, and, at the same time, the most obscure, of all the phenomena of history. It is a calamity that strikes fear into the soul, and yet has always something so mysterious and so vast in reserve, that the thinker is never weary of looking at it, of studying it, of groping for its secrets. No doubt the birth

and growth of peoples offer a very remarkable subject for the observer; the successive development of societies, their gains, their conquests, their triumphs, have something that vividly takes the imagination and holds it captive. But all these events, however great one may think them, seem to be easy of explanation; one accepts them as the mere outcome of the intellectual gifts of man. Once we recognize these gifts, we are not astonished at their results; they explain, by the bare fact of their existence, the great stream of being whose source they are. So, on this score, there need be no difficulty or hesitation. But when we see that after a time of strength and glory all human societies come to their decline and fall – all, I say, not this or that; when we see in what awful silence the earth shows us, scattered on its surface, the wrecks of the civilizations that have preceded our own – not merely the famous civilizations, but also many others, of which we know nothing but the names, and some, that lie as skeletons of stone in deep world-old forests, and have not left us even this shadow of a memory; when the mind returns to our modern states, reflects on their extreme youth, and confesses that they are a growth of yesterday, and that some of them are already toppling to their fall: then at last we recognize, not without a certain philosophic shudder, that the words of the prophets on the instability of mortal things apply with the same rigour to civilizations as to peoples, to peoples as to states, to states as to individuals; and we are forced to affirm that every assemblage of men, however ingenious the network of social relations that protects it, acquires on the very day of its birth, hidden among the elements of its life, the seed of an inevitable death.

But what is this seed, this principle of death? Is it uniform, as its results are, and do all civilizations perish from the same cause?

At first sight we are tempted to answer in the negative; for we have seen the fall of many empires, Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, amid the clash of events that had no likeness one to the other. Yet, if we pierce below the surface, we soon find that this very necessity of coming to an end, that weighs imperiously on all societies without exception, presupposes such a general cause, which, though hidden, cannot be explained away. When we start from this fixed principle of natural death – a principle unaffected by all the cases of violent death – we see that all civilizations, after they have lasted some time, betray to the observer some little symptoms of uneasiness, which are difficult to define, but not less difficult to deny; these are of a like nature in all times and all places. We may admit one obvious point of difference between the fall of states and that of civilizations, when we see the same kind of culture sometimes persisting in a country under foreign rule and weathering every storm of calamity, at other times being destroyed or changed by the slightest breath of a contrary wind; but we are, in the end, more and more driven to the idea that the principle of death which can be seen at the base of all societies is not only inherent in their life, but also uniform and the same for all.

To the elucidation of this great fact I have devoted the studies of which I here give the results.

We moderns are the first to have recognized that every assemblage of men, together with the kind of culture it produces, is doomed to perish. Former ages did not believe this ... The wisdom of the ancients yields little that throws light on our subject, except one fundamental axiom, the recognition of the hand of God in the conduct of this world; to this firm and ultimate principle we must adhere, accepting it in the full sense in which it is understood by the Catholic Church. It is certain that no civilization falls

to the ground unless God wills it; and when we apply to the mortal state of all societies the sacred formula used by the ancient priesthoods to explain some striking catastrophes, which they wrongly considered as isolated facts, we are asserting a truth of the first importance, which should govern the search for all the truths of this world. Add, if you will, that all societies perish because they are sinful – and I will agree with you; this merely sets up a true parallel to the case of individuals, finding in sin the germ of destruction. In this regard, there is no objection to saying that human societies share the fate of their members; they contract the stain from them, and come to a like end. This is to reason merely by the light of nature. But when we have once admitted and pondered these two truths, we shall find no further help, I repeat, in the wisdom of the ancients.

That wisdom tells us nothing definite as to the ways in which the divine will moves in order to compass the death of peoples; it is, on the contrary, driven to consider these ways as essentially mysterious. It is seized with a pious terror at the sight of ruins, and admits too easily that the fallen peoples could not have been thus shaken, struck down and hurled into the gulf, except by the aid of miracles. I can readily believe that certain events have had a miraculous element, so far as this is stated by Scripture; but where, as is usually the case, the formal testimony of Scripture is wanting, we may legitimately hold the ancient opinion to be incomplete and unenlightened. We may, in fact, take the opposite view, and recognize that the heavy hand of God is laid without ceasing on our societies, as the effect of a decision pronounced before the rise of the first people; and that the blow falls according to rule and foreknowledge, by virtue of fixed edicts, inscribed in the code of the universe by the side of other laws which, in their

rigid severity, govern organic and inorganic nature alike. We may justly reproach the philosophy of the early sacred writers with a lack of experience; and so, we may say, they explain a mystery merely by enunciating a theological truth which, however certain, is itself another mystery. They have not pushed their inquiries so far as to observe the facts of the natural world ...

The great minds of Athens and Rome formulated the theory, accepted by later ages, that states, civilizations and peoples are destroyed only by luxury, effeminacy, misgovernment, fanaticism and the corruption of morals. These causes, taken singly or together, were declared to be responsible for the fall of human societies; the natural corollary being that in the absence of these causes there can be no solvent whatever. The final conclusion is that societies, more fortunate than men, die only a violent death; and if a nation can be imagined as escaping the destructive forces I have mentioned, there is no reason why it should not last as long as the earth itself ...

I wish I could show myself indulgent to the use that the authors of the eighteenth century have made of the theory. But there is too great a difference between their masters and themselves. The former had even a quixotic devotion to the maintenance of the social order; the latter were eager for novelty and furiously bent on destruction. The ancients made their false ideas bear a noble progeny; the moderns have produced only monstrous abortions. Their theory has furnished them with arms against all principles of government, which they have reproached in turn with tyranny, fanaticism and corruption. The Voltairean way of 'preventing the ruin of society' is to destroy religion, law, industry and commerce, under the pretext that religion is another name for fanaticism, law for despotism, industry and commerce for luxury and corruption. Where so many

errors reign, I certainly agree that we have 'bad government'.

I have not the least desire to write a polemic; my object is merely to show how an idea common to Thucydides and the Abbé Raynal can produce quite opposite results. It makes for conservatism in the one, for an anarchic cynicism in the other – and is an error in both. The causes usually given for the fall of nations are not necessarily the real causes; and though I willingly admit that they may come to the surface in the death-agony of a people, I deny that they have enough power, enough destructive energy, to draw on, by themselves, the irremediable catastrophe.

3. FANATICISM, LUXURY, IMMORALITY AND IRRELIGION

I MUST first explain what I understand by a 'society'. I do not mean the more or less extended sphere within which, in some form or other, a distinct sovereignty is exercised. The Athenian democracy is not a 'society' in our sense, any more than the kingdom of Magadha, the empire of Pontus, or the caliphate of Egypt in the time of the Fatimites. They are fragments of societies, which, no doubt, change, coalesce or break up according to the natural laws that I am investigating; but their existence or death does not imply the existence or death of a society. Their formation is usually a mere transitory phenomenon, having but a limited or indirect influence on the civilization in which they arise. What I mean by a 'society' is an assemblage of men moved by similar ideas and the same instincts; their political unity may be more or less imperfect, but their social unity must be complete ...

The phenomena of fanaticism, luxury, corruption of

morals and irreligion have all been found in a highly developed state, either in isolation or together, among peoples which were actually the better for them – or at any rate not the worse.

The Aztec Empire in America seems to have existed mainly for the greater glory of fanaticism. I cannot imagine anything more fanatical than a society like that of the Aztecs, which rested on a religious foundation, continually watered by the blood of human sacrifice. It has been denied, perhaps with some truth, that the ancient peoples of Europe ever practised ritual murder on victims who were regarded as innocent, with the exception of shipwrecked sailors and prisoners of war. But for the ancient Mexicans one victim was as good as another. With a ferocity recognized by the modern physiologist Prichard as characteristic of the races of the New World, they massacred their fellow citizens on their altars, without pity, without flinching and without discrimination. This did not prevent their being a powerful, industrious and wealthy people, which would certainly for many ages have gone on flourishing, reigning and throat-cutting, had not the genius of Hernando Cortés and the courage of his companions stepped in to put an end to the monstrous existence of such an empire. Thus fanaticism does not cause the fall of states.

Luxury and effeminacy have no better claims than fanaticism. Their effects are to be seen only in the upper classes; and though they assumed different forms in the ancient world, among the Greeks, the Persians and the Romans, I doubt whether they were ever brought to a greater pitch of refinement than at the present day, in France, Germany, England and Russia – especially in the last two. And it is just these two, England and Russia, that, of all the states of modern Europe, seem to be gifted with a peculiar vitality. Again, in the Middle Ages, the Venetians,

the Genoese and the Pisans crowded their shops with the treasures of the whole world; they displayed them in their palaces, and carried them over every sea. But they were certainly none the weaker for that. Thus luxury and effeminacy are in no way the necessary causes of weakness and ruin.

Again, the corruption of morals, however terrible a scourge it may be, is not always an agent of destruction. If it were, the military power and commercial prosperity of a nation would have to vary directly with the purity of its morals; but this is by no means the case. The curious idea that the early Romans had all the virtues has now been rightly given up by most people. We no longer see anything very edifying in the patricians of the Early Republic, who treated their wives like slaves, their children like cattle, and their creditors like wild beasts. If there were still any advocates to plead their unrighteous cause by arguing from an assumed variation in the moral standard of different ages, it would not be very hard to show how flimsy such an argument is. In all ages the misuse of power has excited equal indignation ...

From the beginning of history, there has been no human society, however small, that has not contained the germ of every vice. And yet, however burdened with this load of depravity, the nations seem to march on very comfortably, and often, in fact, to owe their greatness to their detestable customs. The Spartans enjoyed a long life and the admiration of men merely owing to their laws, which were those of a robber-state. Was the fall of the Phoenicians due to the corruption that gnawed their vitals and was disseminated by them over the whole world? Not at all; on the contrary, this corruption was the main instrument of their power and glory. From the day when they first touched the shores of the Greek Islands, and went their way, cheating their

customers, robbing their hosts, abducting women for the slave-market, stealing in one place to sell in another – from that day, it is true, their reputation fell not unreasonably low; but they did not prosper any the less for that, and they hold a place in history which is quite unaffected by all the stories of their greed and treachery.

Far from admitting the superior moral character of early societies, I have no doubt that nations, as they grow older and so draw nearer their fall, present a far more satisfactory appearance from the censor's point of view. Customs become less rigid, rough edges become softened, the path of life is made easier, the rights existing between man and man have had time to become better defined and understood, and so the theories of social justice have reached, little by little, a higher degree of delicacy ...

We need not go back to those distant epochs, but may judge them by ourselves. Paris is certainly one of the places on this earth where civilization has touched its highest point, and where the contrast with primitive ages is most marked; and yet you will find a large number of religious and learned people admitting that in no place and time were there so many examples of practical virtue, of sincere piety, of saintly lives governed by a fine sense of duty, as are to be met today in the great modern city. The ideals of goodness are as high now as they ever were in the loftiest minds of the seventeenth century; and they have laid aside the bitterness, the strain of sternness and savagery – I was almost saying, of pedantry – that sometimes coloured them in that age. And so, as a set-off to the frightful perversities of the modern spirit, we find, in the very temple where that spirit has set up the high altar of its power, a striking contrast, which never appeared to former centuries in the same consoling light as it has to our own.

I do not even believe that there is a lack of great men in periods of corruption and decadence; and by 'great men' I mean those most richly endowed with energy of character and the masculine virtues. If I look at the list of the Roman emperors (most of them, by the way, as high above their subjects in merit as they were in rank) I find names like Trajan, Antoninus Pius, Septimius Severus and Jovian; and below the throne, even among the city mob, I see with admiration all the great theologians, the great martyrs, the apostles of the primitive Church, to say nothing of the virtuous pagans. Strong, brave and active spirits filled the camps and the Italian towns; and one may doubt whether in the time of Cincinnatus Rome held, in proportion, so many men of eminence in all the walks of practical life. The testimony of the facts is conclusive.

Thus men of strong character, men of talent and energy, so far from being unknown to human societies in the time of their decadence and old age, are actually to be found in greater abundance than in the days when an empire is young. Further, the ordinary level of morality is higher in the later period than in the earlier. It is not generally true to say that in states on the point of death the corruption of morals is any more virulent than in those just born. It is equally doubtful whether this corruption brings about their fall; for some states, far from dying of their perversity, have lived and grown fat on it. One may go further, and show that moral degradation is not necessarily a mortal disease at all; for, as against the other maladies of society, it has the advantage of being curable; and the cure is sometimes very rapid.

In fact, the morals of any particular people are in continual ebb and flow throughout its history. To go no further afield than our own France, we may say that, in the fifth and sixth centuries, the conquered race of the

Gallo-Romans were certainly better than their conquerors from a moral point of view. Taken individually, they were not always their inferiors even in courage and the military virtues. In the following centuries, when the two races had begun to intermingle, they seem to have deteriorated; and we have no reason to be very proud of the picture that was presented by our dear country about the eighth and ninth centuries. But in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth, a great change came over the scene. Society had succeeded in harmonizing its most discordant elements, and the state of morals was reasonably good. The ideas of the time were not favourable to the little casuistries that keep a man from the right path even when he wishes to walk in it. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were times of terrible conflict and perversity. Brigandage reigned supreme. It was a period of decadence in the strictest sense of the word; and the decadence was shown in a thousand ways. In view of the debauchery, the tyranny and the massacres of that age, of the complete withering of all the finer feelings in every section of the state – in the nobles who plundered their villeins, in the citizens who sold their country to England, in a clergy that was false to its professions – one might have thought that the whole society was about to crash to the ground and bury its shame deep under its own ruins ... The crash never came. The society continued to live; it devised remedies, it beat back its foes, it emerged from the dark cloud. The sixteenth century was far more reputable than its predecessor, in spite of its orgies of blood, which were a pale reflection of those of the preceding age. St Bartholomew's Day is not such a shameful memory as the massacre of the Armagnacs. Finally, the French people passed from this semi-barbarous twilight into the pure splendour of day, the age of Fénelon, Bossuet and Montausier. Thus, up to Louis XIV, our

history shows a series of rapid changes from good to evil, from evil to good; while the real vitality of the nation has little to do with its moral condition. I have touched lightly on the larger curves of change; to trace the multitude of lesser changes within these would require many pages. To speak even of what we have all but seen with our own eyes, is it not clear that in every decade since 1787 the standard of morality has varied enormously? I conclude that the corruption of morals is a fleeting and unstable phenomenon; it becomes sometimes worse and sometimes better, and so cannot be considered as necessarily causing the ruin of societies ...

Many people have come to think that the end of a society is at hand when its religious ideas tend to weaken and disappear. They see a kind of connection between the open profession of the doctrines of Zeno and Epicurus at Athens and Rome, with the consequent abandonment (according to them) of the national cults, and the fall of the two republics. They fail to notice that these are virtually the only examples that can be given of such a coincidence. The Persian empire at the time of its fall was wholly under the sway of the Magi. Tyre, Carthage, Judaea, the Aztec and Peruvian monarchies were struck down while fanatically clinging to their altars. Thus it cannot be maintained that all the peoples whose existence as a nation is being destroyed are at that moment expiating the sin they committed in deserting the faith of their fathers. Further, even the two examples that go to support the theory seem to prove much more than they really do. I deny absolutely that the ancient cults were ever given up in Rome or Athens, until the day when they were supplanted in the hearts of all men by the victorious religion of Christ. In other words, I believe that there has never been a real breach of continuity in the religious beliefs of any nation on

this earth. The outward form or inner meaning of the creed may have changed; but we shall always find some Gallic Teutates making way for the Roman Jupiter, Jupiter for the Christian God, without any interval of unbelief, in exactly the same way as the dead give up their inheritance to the living. Hence, as there has never been a nation of which one could say that it had no faith at all, we have no right to assume that the lack of faith causes the destruction of states.

4. THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

I KNOW the difficulty of my present task. That I should even venture to touch on it will seem a kind of paradox to many of my readers. People are convinced, and rightly convinced, that the good administration of good laws has a direct and powerful influence on the health of a people; and this conviction is so strong, that they attribute to such administration the mere fact that a human society goes on living at all. Here they are wrong.

They would be right, of course, if it were true that nations could exist only in a state of well-being; but we know that, like individuals, they can often go on for a long time, carrying within them the seeds of some fell disease, which may suddenly break out in a virulent form. If nations invariably died of their sufferings, not one would survive the first years of its growth; for it is precisely in those years that they show the worst administration, the worst laws and the greatest disorder. But in this respect they are the exact opposite of the human organism. The greatest enemy that the latter has to fear, especially in infancy, is a continuous series of illnesses – we know beforehand that there is no resisting these; to a society,

however, such a series does no harm at all, and history gives us abundant proof that the body politic is always being cured of the longest, the most terrible and devastating attacks of disease, of which the worst forms are ill-conceived laws and an oppressive or negligent administration. The reader will understand that I am not speaking of the political existence of a centre of sovereignty, but of the life of a whole society, or the span of a whole civilization.

We will first try to make clear in what a 'bad government' consists.

It is a malady that seems to take many forms. It would be impossible even to enumerate them all, for they are multiplied to infinity by the differences in the constitutions of peoples, and in the place and time of their existence. But if we group these forms under four main headings, there are very few varieties that will not be included.

A government is bad when it is set up by a foreign Power. Athens experienced this kind of government under the Thirty Tyrants; they were driven out, and the national spirit, far from dying under their oppressive rule, was tempered by it to a greater hardness.

A government is bad when it is based on conquest, pure and simple. In the fourteenth century practically the whole of France passed under the yoke of England. It emerged stronger than before, and entered on a career of great brilliance. China was overrun and conquered by hordes of Mongols; it managed to expel them beyond its borders, after sapping their vitality in a most extraordinary way. Since that time China has fallen into a new servitude; but although the Manchus have already enjoyed more than a century of sovereignty, they are on the eve of suffering the same fate as the Mongols, and have passed through a similar period of weakness.

A government is especially bad when the principle on

which it rests becomes vitiated, and ceases to operate in the healthy and vigorous way it did at first. This was the condition of the Spanish monarchy. It was based on the military spirit and the idea of social freedom; towards the end of Philip II's reign it forgot its origin and began to degenerate. There has never been a country where all theories of conduct had become more obsolete, where the executive was more feeble and discredited, where the organization of the Church itself was so open to criticism. Agriculture and industry, like everything else, were struck down and all but buried in the morass where the nation was decaying. But is Spain dead? Not at all. The country of which so many despaired has given Europe the glorious example of a desperate resistance to the fortune of our arms; and at the present moment it is perhaps in Spain, of all the modern states, that the feeling of nationality is most intense.

Finally, a government is bad when, by the very nature of its institutions, it gives colour to an antagonism between the supreme power and the mass of the people, or between different classes of society. Thus, in the Middle Ages, we see the kings of England and France engaged in a struggle with their great vassals, and the peasants flying at the throats of their overlords. In Germany, too, the first effects of the new freedom of thought were the civil wars of the Hussites, the Anabaptists and all the other sectaries. A little before that, Italy was in such distress through the division of the supreme power, and the quarrel over the fragments between the Emperor, the Pope, the nobles and the communes, that the masses, not knowing whom to obey, often ended by obeying nobody. Did this cause the ruin of the whole society? Not at all. Its civilization was never more brilliant, its industry more productive, its influence abroad more incontestable.

I can well believe that sometimes, in the midst of these

storms, a wise and potent law-giver came, like a sunbeam, to shed the light of his beneficence on the peoples he ruled. The light remained only for a short space; and just as its absence had not caused death, so its presence did not bring life. For this, the times of prosperity would have had to be frequent and of long duration. But upright princes were rare in that age, and are rare in all ages. Even the best of them have their detractors, and the happiest pictures are full of shadow. Do all historians alike regard the time of King William III as an era of prosperity for England? Do they all admire Louis XIV, the Great, without reserve? On the contrary; the critics are all at their posts, and their arrows know where to find their mark. And yet these are, on the whole, the best regulated and most fruitful periods in the history of ourselves and our neighbours. Good governments are so thinly sown on the soil of the ages, and even when they spring up, are so withered by criticism; political science, the highest and most intricate of all sciences, is so incommensurate with the weakness of man, that we cannot sincerely claim that nations perish from being ill-governed. Thank heaven they have the power of soon becoming accustomed to their sufferings, which, in their worst forms, are infinitely preferable to anarchy. The most superficial study of history will be enough to show that however bad may be the government that is draining away the life-blood of a people it is often better than many of the administrations that have gone before.

5. THE FORMATION AND DEGENERATION OF SOCIETIES

However little the spirit of the foregoing pages may have been understood, no one will conclude from them that I

attach no importance to the maladies of the social organism, and that, for me, bad government, fanaticism and irreligion are mere unmeaning accidents. On the contrary I quite agree with the ordinary view, that it is a lamentable thing to see a society being gradually undermined by these fell diseases, and that no amount of care and trouble would be wasted if a remedy could only be found ...

The examples I have brought forward seem to me conclusive, though their number might be indefinitely increased. Through some such reasoning as this the ordinary opinions of men have at last come to contain an instinctive perception of the truth. It is being dimly seen that one ought not to have given such a preponderant importance to evils which were after all merely derivative, and that the true causes of the life and death of peoples should have been sought elsewhere, and been drawn from a deeper well. Men have begun to look at the inner constitution of a society, by itself, quite apart from all circumstances of health or disease. They have shown themselves ready to admit that no external cause could lay the hand of death on any society, so long as a certain destructive principle, inherent in it from the first, born from its womb and nourished on its entrails, had not reached its full maturity; on the other hand, so soon as this destructive principle had come into existence, the society was doomed to certain death, even though it had the best of all possible governments – in exactly the same way as a spent horse will fall dead on the road ...

Societies perish because they are degenerate, and for no other reason. This is the evil condition that makes them wholly unable to withstand the shock of the disasters that close in upon them; and when they can no longer endure the blows of adverse fortune, and have no power to raise

their heads when the scourge has passed, then we have the sublime spectacle of a nation in agony. If it perish, it is because it has no longer the same vigour as it had of old in battling with the dangers of life; in a word, because it is *degenerate*. The term is excellent, but we must explain it a little better, and give it a definite meaning. How and why is a nation's vigour lost? How does it degenerate? These are the questions which we must try to answer. Up to the present, men have been content with finding the word, without unveiling the reality that lies behind. This further step I shall now attempt to take.

The word *degenerate*, when applied to a people, means (as it ought to mean) that the people has no longer the same intrinsic value as it had before, because it has no longer the same blood in its veins, continual adulterations having gradually affected the quality of that blood. In other words, though the nation bears the name given by its founders, the name no longer connotes the same race; in fact, the man of a decadent time, the *degenerate* man properly so called, is a different being, from the racial point of view, from the heroes of the great ages. I agree that he still keeps something of their essence; but the more he degenerates the more attenuated does this 'something' become. The heterogeneous elements that henceforth prevail in him give him quite a different nationality – a very original one, no doubt, but such originality is not to be envied. He is only a very distant kinsman of those he still calls his ancestors. He, and his civilization with him, will certainly die on the day when the primordial race-unit is so broken up and swamped by the influx of foreign elements, that its effective qualities have no longer a sufficient freedom of action. It will not, of course, absolutely disappear, but it will in practice be so beaten down and enfeebled, that its power will be felt less and less as time goes on. It is at this

point that all the results of degeneration will appear, and the process may be considered complete.

If I manage to prove this proposition, I shall have given a meaning to the word 'degeneration'. By showing how the essential quality of a nation gradually alters, I shift the responsibility for its decadence, which thus becomes, in a way, less shameful, for it weighs no longer on the sons, but on the nephews, then on the cousins, then on collaterals more or less removed. And when I have shown by examples that great peoples, at the moment of their death, have only a very small and insignificant share in the blood of the founders, into whose inheritance they come, I shall thereby have explained clearly enough how it is possible for civilizations to fall – the reason being that they are no longer in the same hands. At the same time I shall be touching on a problem which is much more dangerous than that which I have tried to solve in the preceding chapters. This problem is: 'Are there serious and ultimate differences of value between human races; and can these differences be estimated?'

I will begin at once to develop the series of arguments that touch the first point; they will indirectly settle the second also.

To put my ideas into a clearer and more easily intelligible form I may compare a nation to a human body, which, according to the physiologists, is constantly renewing all its parts; the work of transformation that goes on is incessant, and after a certain number of years the body retains hardly any of its former elements. Thus, in the old man, there are no traces of the man of middle age, in the adult no traces of the youth, nor in the youth any of the child; the personal identity in all these stages is kept purely by the succession of inner and outer forms, each an imperfect copy of the last. Yet I will admit one difference between a nation and

a human body; in the former there is no question of the 'forms' being preserved, for these are destroyed and disappear with enormous rapidity. I will take a people, or better, a tribe, at the moment when, yielding to a definite vital instinct, it provides itself with laws and begins to play a part in the world. By the mere fact of its wants and powers increasing, it inevitably finds itself in contact with other similar associations, and by war or peaceful measures succeeds in incorporating them with itself.

Not all human families can reach this first step; but it is a step that every tribe must take if it is to rank one day as a nation. Even if a certain number of races, themselves perhaps not very far advanced on the ladder of civilization, have passed through this stage, we cannot properly regard this as a general rule.

Indeed, the human species seems to have a very great difficulty in raising itself above a rudimentary type of organization; the transition to a more complex state is made only by those groups of tribes that are eminently gifted. I may cite, in support of this, the actual condition of a large number of communities spread throughout the world. These backward tribes, especially the Polynesian Negroes, the Samoyedes and others in the far north, and the majority of the African races have never been able to shake themselves free from their impotence; they live side by side in complete independence of each other. The stronger massacre the weaker, the weaker try to move as far away as possible from the stronger. This sums up the political ideas of these embryo societies, which have lived on in their imperfect state, without possibility of improvement, as long as the human race itself. It may be said that these miserable savages are a very small part of the earth's population. Granted; but we must take account of all the similar peoples who have lived and disappeared. Their

number is incalculable, and certainly includes the vast majority of the pure-blooded yellow and black races.

If then we are driven to admit that for a very large number of human beings it has been, and always will be, impossible to take even the first step towards civilization; if, again, we consider that these peoples are scattered over the whole face of the earth under the most varying conditions of climate and environment, that they live indifferently in the tropics, in the temperate zones and in the Arctic circle, by sea, lake and river, in the depths of the forest, in the grassy plains, in the arid deserts, we must conclude that a part of mankind is in its own nature stricken with a paralysis, which makes it for ever unable to take even the first step towards civilization, since it cannot overcome the natural repugnance, felt by men and animals alike, to a crossing of blood.

Leaving these tribes that are incapable of civilization on one side, we come, in our journey upwards, to those which understand that if they wish to increase their power and prosperity they are absolutely compelled, either by war or peaceful measures, to draw their neighbours within their sphere of influence. War is undoubtedly the simpler way of doing this. Accordingly, they go to war. But when the campaign is finished, and the craving for destruction is satisfied, some prisoners are left over; these prisoners become slaves, and as slaves, work for their masters. We have class distinctions at once, and an industrial system: the tribe has become a little people. This is a higher rung on the ladder of civilization, and is not necessarily passed by all the tribes which have been able to reach it; many remain at this stage in cheerful stagnation.

But there are others, more imaginative and energetic, whose ideas soar beyond mere brigandage. They manage to conquer a great territory, and assume rights of owner-

ship not only over the inhabitants, but also over their land. From this moment a real nation has been formed. The two races often continue for a time to live side by side without mingling; and yet, as they become indispensable to each other, as a community of work and interest is gradually built up, as the pride and rancour of conquest begin to ebb away, as those below naturally tend to rise to the level of their masters, while the masters have a thousand reasons for allowing, or even for promoting, such a tendency, the mixture of blood finally takes place, the two races cease to be associated with distinct tribes, and become more and more fused into a single whole.

The spirit of isolation is, however, so innate in the human race, that even those who have reached this advanced stage of crossing refuse in many cases to take a step further. There are some peoples who are, as we know positively, of mixed origin, but who keep their feeling for the clan to an extraordinary degree. The Arabs, for example, do more than merely spring from different branches of the Semitic stock; they belong at one and the same time to the so-called families of Shem and Ham, not to speak of a vast number of local strains that are intermingled with these. Nevertheless, their attachment to the tribe, as a separate unit, is one of the most striking features of their national character and their political history. In fact, it has been thought possible to attribute their expulsion from Spain not only to the actual breaking up of their power there, but also, to a large extent, to their being continually divided into smaller and mutually antagonistic groups, in the struggles for promotion among the Arab families at the petty courts of Valencia, Toledo, Cordoba and Granada.

We may say the same about the majority of such peoples. Further, where the tribal separation has broken

down, a national feeling takes its place, and acts with a similar vigour, which a community of religion is not enough to destroy. This is the case among the Arabs and the Turks, the Persians and the Jews, the Parsees and the Hindus, the Nestorians of Syria and the Kurds. We find it also in European Turkey, and can trace its course in Hungary, among the Magyars, the Saxons, the Wallachians and the Croats. I know, from what I have seen with my own eyes, that in certain parts of France, the country where races are mingled more than perhaps anywhere else, there are little communities to be found to this day, who feel a repugnance to marrying outside their own village.

I think I am right in concluding from these examples, which cover all countries and ages, including our own, that the human race in all its branches has a secret repulsion from the crossing of blood, a repulsion which in many of the branches is invincible, and in others is only conquered to a slight extent. Even those who most completely shake off the yoke of this idea cannot get rid of the few last traces of it; yet such peoples are the only members or our species who can be civilized at all.

Thus mankind lives in obedience to two laws, one of repulsion, the other of attraction; these act with different force on different peoples. The first is fully respected only by those races which can never raise themselves above the elementary completeness of the tribal life, while the power of the second, on the contrary, is the more absolute, as the racial units on which it is exercised are more capable of development.

Here especially I must be concrete. I have just taken the example of a people in embryo, whose state is like that of a single family. I have given them the qualities which will allow them to pass into the state of a nation. Well, suppose

they have become a nation. History does not tell me what the elements were that constituted the original group; all I know is that these elements fitted it for the transformation which I have made it undergo. Now that it has grown, it has only two possibilities. One or other of two destinies is inevitable. It will either conquer or be conquered.

I will give it the better part, and assume that it will conquer. It will at the same time rule, administer and civilize. It will not go through its provinces, sowing a useless harvest of fire and massacre. Monuments, customs and institutions will be alike sacred. It will change what it can usefully modify, and replace it by something better. Weakness in its hands will become strength. It will behave in such a way that, in the words of Scripture, it will be magnified in the sight of men.

I do not know if the same thought has already struck the reader; but in the picture which I am presenting – and which in certain features is that of the Hindus, the Egyptians, the Persians and the Macedonians – two facts appear to me to stand out. The first is that a nation, which itself lacks vigour and power, is suddenly called upon to share a new and a better destiny – that of the strong masters into whose hands it has fallen; this was the case with the Anglo-Saxons, when they had been subdued by the Normans. The second fact is that a picked race of men, a sovereign people, with the usual strong propensities of such a people to cross its blood with another's, finds itself henceforth in close contact with a race whose inferiority is shown, not only by defeat, but also by the lack of the attributes that may be seen in the conquerors. From the very day when the conquest is accomplished and the fusion begins, there appears a noticeable change of quality in the blood of the masters. If there were no other modifying influence at work, then – at the end of a number of years, which would

vary according to the number of peoples that composed the original stock – we should be confronted with a new race less powerful certainly than the better of its two ancestors, but still of considerable strength. It would have developed special qualities resulting from the actual mixture, and unknown to the communities from which it sprang. But the case is not generally so simple as this, and the intermingling of blood is not confined for long to the two constituent peoples.

The empire I have just been imagining is a powerful one; and its power is used to control its neighbours. I assume that there will be new conquests; and, every time, a current of fresh blood will be mingled with the main stream. Henceforth, as the nation grows, whether by war or treaty, its racial character changes more and more. It is rich, commercial and civilized. The needs and the pleasures of other peoples find ample satisfaction in its capitals, its great towns and its ports; while its myriad attractions cause many foreigners to make it their home. After a short time, we might truly say that a distinction of castes takes the place of the original distinction of races.

I am willing to grant that the people of whom I am speaking is strengthened in its exclusive notions by the most formal commands of religion, and that some dreadful penalty lurks in the background, to awe the disobedient. But since the people is civilized, its character is soft and tolerant, even to the contempt of its faith. Its oracles will speak in vain; there will be births outside the caste-limits. Every day new distinctions will have to be drawn, new classifications invented; the number of social grades will be increased, and it will be almost impossible to know where one is, amid the infinite variety of the subdivisions, that change from province to province, from canton to canton, from village to village ...

Generally the dominating peoples begin by being far fewer in number than those they conquer; while, on the other hand, certain races that form the basis of the population in immense districts are extremely prolific – the Celts, for example, and the Slavs. This is yet another reason for the rapid disappearance of the conquering races. Again, their greater activity and the more personal part they take in the affairs of the state make them the chief mark for attack after a disastrous battle, a proscription or a revolution. Thus, while by their very genius for civilization they collect round them the different elements in which they are to be absorbed, they are the victims, first of their original smallness of number, and then of a host of secondary causes which combine together for their destruction.

It is fairly obvious that the time when the disappearance takes place will vary considerably, according to circumstances. Yet it does finally come to pass, and is everywhere quite complete, long before the end of the civilization which the victorious race is supposed to be animating. A people may often go on living and working, and even growing in power, after the active, generating force of its life and glory has ceased to exist. Does this contradict what I have said above? Not at all; for while the blood of the civilizing race is gradually drained away by being parcelled out among the peoples that are conquered or annexed, the impulse originally given to these peoples still persists. The institutions which the dead master had invented, the laws he had prescribed, the customs he had initiated – all these live after him. No doubt the customs, laws and institutions have quite forgotten the spirit that informed their youth; they survived in dishonoured old age, every day more sapless and rotten. But so long as even their shadows remain, the building stands, the body seems to have a soul, the pale ghost walks. When the

original impulse has worked itself out, the last word has been said. Nothing remains; the civilization is dead ...

A state may be overthrown by battle and defeat, but not a civilization or a social organism. Invasion and defeat are but the dark clouds that for a time blot out the day, and then pass over. For example, the English are the masters of India, and yet their moral hold over their subjects is almost non-existent. They are themselves influenced in many ways by the local civilization, and cannot succeed in stamping their ideas on a people that fears its conquerors, but is only physically dominated by them. It keeps its soul erect, and its thoughts apart from theirs. The Hindu race has become a stranger to the race that governs it today, and its civilization does not obey the law that gives the battle to the strong. External forms, kingdoms and empires have changed, and will change again; but the foundations on which they rest, and from which they spring, do not necessarily change with them. Though Hyderabad, Lahore and Delhi are no longer capital cities, Hindu society none the less persists. A moment will come, in one way or another, when India will again live publicly, as she already does privately, under her own laws; and, by the help either of the races actually existing or of a hybrid proceeding from them, will assume again, in the full sense of the word, a political personality.

The hazard of war cannot destroy the life of a people. At most, it suspends its animation for a time, and in some ways shears it of its outward pomp. So long as the blood and institutions of a nation keep to a sufficient degree the impress of the original race, that nation exists. Whether, as in the case of the Chinese, its conqueror has, in a purely material sense, greater energy than itself; whether, like the Hindu, it is matched in a long and arduous trial of patience against a nation such as the English, in all points its superior;

in either case the thought of its certain destiny should bring consolation – one day it will be free. But if, like the Greeks, and the Romans of the Later Empire, the people has been absolutely drained of its original blood, and the qualities conferred by the blood, then the day of its defeat will be the day of its death. It has used up the time that heaven granted at its birth, for it has completely changed its race, and with its race its nature. It is therefore degenerate ...

The destiny of civilizations is not a matter of chance; it does not depend on the toss of a coin. It is only men who are killed by the sword; and when the most redoubtable, warlike and successful nations have nothing but valour in their hearts, military science in their heads, and the laurels of victory in their hands, without any thought that rises above mere conquest, they always end merely by learning, and learning badly, from those they have conquered, how to live in time of peace. The annals of the Celts and the nomadic hordes of Asia tell no other tale than this.

I have now given a meaning to the word *degeneration*; and so have been able to attack the problem of a nation's vitality. I must next proceed to prove what for the sake of clearness I have had to put forward as a mere hypothesis; namely, that there are real differences in the relative value of human races. The consequences of proving this will be considerable, and cover a wide field ...

6. RACE AND INSTITUTIONS

The idea of an original, clear-cut and permanent inequality among the different races is one of the oldest and most widely held opinions in the world. We need not be surprised at this, when we consider the isolation of

primitive tribes and communities, and how in the early ages they all used to 'retire into their shell'; a great number have never left this stage. Except in quite modern times, this idea has been the basis of nearly all theories of government. Every people, great or small, has begun by making inequality its chief political motto. This is the origin of all systems of caste, of nobility and of aristocracy, in so far as the last is founded on the right of birth. The law of primogeniture, which assumes the pre-eminence of the first born and his descendants, is merely a corollary of the same principle. With it go the repulsion felt for the foreigner and the superiority which every nation claims for itself with regard to its neighbours. As soon as the isolated groups have begun to intermingle and to become one people, they grow great and civilized, and look at each other in a more favourable light, as one finds the other useful. Then, and only then, do we see the absolute principle of the inequality, and hence the mutual hostility, of races questioned and undermined. Finally, when the majority of the citizens have mixed blood flowing in their veins, they erect into a universal and absolute truth what is only true for themselves, and feel it to be their duty to assert that all men are equal. They are also moved by praiseworthy dislike of oppression, a legitimate hatred towards the abuse of power; to all thinking men these cast an ugly shadow on the memory of races which have once been dominant, and which have never failed (for such is the way of the world) to justify to some extent many of the charges that have been brought against them. From mere declamation against tyranny, men go on to deny the natural causes of the superiority against which they are declaiming. The tyrant's power is, to them, not only misused, but usurped. They refuse, quite wrongly, to admit that certain qualities are by a fatal necessity the exclusive inheritance of such

and such a stock. In fact, the more heterogeneous the elements of which a people is composed, the more complacently does it assert that the most different powers are, or can be, possessed in the same measure by every fraction of the human race, without exception. This theory is barely applicable to these hybrid philosophers themselves; but they extend it to cover all the generations which were, are and ever shall be on the earth. They end one day by summing up their views in the words which, like the bag of Aeolus, contain so many storms – 'All men are brothers.'

This is the political axiom. Would you like to hear it in its scientific form? 'All men', say the defenders of human equality, 'are furnished with similar intellectual powers, of the same nature, of the same value, of the same compass.' These are not perhaps their exact words, but they certainly give the right meaning. So the brain of the Huron Indian contains in an undeveloped form an intellect which is absolutely the same as that of the Englishman or the Frenchman! Why then, in the course of the ages, has he not invented printing or steam power? I should be quite justified in asking our Huron why, if he is equal to our European peoples, his tribe has never produced a Caesar or a Charlemagne among its warriors, and why his bards and sorcerers have, in some inexplicable way, neglected to become Homers and Galens. The difficulty is usually met by the blessed phrase, 'the predominating influence of environment'. According to this doctrine, an island will not see the same miracles of civilization as a continent, the same people will be different in the north from what it is in the south, forests will not allow of developments which are favoured by open country. What else? The humidity of a marsh, I suppose, will produce a civilization which would inevitably have been stifled by the dryness of the Sahara! However ingenious these little hypotheses may be,

the testimony of fact is against them. In spite of wind and rain, cold and heat, sterility and fruitfulness, the world has seen barbarism and civilization flourishing everywhere, one after the other, on the same soil. The brutish fellah is tanned by the same sun as scorched the powerful priest of Memphis; the learned professor of Berlin lectures under the same inclement sky that once beheld the wretched existence of the Finnish savage.

The curious point is that the theory of equality, which is held by the majority of men and so has permeated our customs and institutions, has not been powerful enough to overthrow the evidence against it; and those who are most convinced of its truth pay homage every day to its opposite. No one at any time refuses to admit that there are great differences between nations, and the ordinary speech of men, with a naive inconsistency, confesses the fact. In this it is merely imitating the practice of other ages which were not less convinced than we are – and for the same reason – of the absolute equality of races.

While clinging to the liberal dogma of human brotherhood, every nation has always managed to add to the names of others certain qualifications and epithets that suggest their unlikeness from itself. The Roman of Italy called the Graeco-Roman a *Graeculus*, or 'little Greek', and gave him the monopoly of cowardice and empty chatter. He ridiculed the Carthaginian settler, and pretended to be able to pick him out among a thousand for his litigious character and his want of faith. The Alexandrians were held to be witty, insolent and seditious. In the Middle Ages, the Anglo-Norman kings accused their French subjects of lightness and inconstancy. Today, everyone talks of the 'national characteristics' of the German, the Spaniard, the Englishman and the Russian. I am not asking whether the judgments are true or not. My sole

point is that they exist, and are adopted in ordinary speech. Thus, if on the one hand human societies are called equal, and on the other we find some of them frivolous, others serious; some avaricious, others thriftless; some passionately fond of fighting, others careful of their lives and energies; – it stands to reason that these differing nations must have destinies which are also absolutely different, and, in a word, unequal. The stronger will play the parts of kings and rulers in the tragedy of the world. The weaker will be content with a more humble position.

I do not think that the usual idea of a national character for each people has yet been reconciled with the belief, which is just as widely held, that all peoples are equal. Yet the contradition is striking and flagrant, and all the more serious because the most ardent democrats are the first to claim superiority for the Anglo-Saxons of North America over all the nations of the same continent. It is true that they ascribe the high position of their favourites merely to their political constitution. But, so far as I know, they do not deny that the countrymen of Penn and Washington are, as a nation, peculiarly prone to set up liberal institutions in all their places of settlement, and, what is more, to keep them going. Is not this very tenacity a wonderful characteristic of this branch of the human race, and the more precious because most of the societies which have existed, or still exist, in the world seem to be without it?

I do not flatter myself that I shall be able to enjoy this inconsistency without opposition. The friends of equality will no doubt talk very loudly, at this point, about 'the power of customs and institutions'. They will tell me once more how powerfully the health and growth of a nation are influenced by 'the essential quality of a government, taken by itself', or 'the fact of despotism or liberty'. But it is just at this point that I too shall oppose their arguments.

... As a people is born before the laws, the laws take after the people; and receive from it the stamp which they are afterwards to impress in their turn. I have already mentioned that as nations become greater, more powerful and more civilized, their blood loses its purity and their instincts are gradually altered. As a result, it becomes impossible for them to live happily under the laws that suited their ancestors. New generations have new customs and tendencies, and profound changes in the institutions are not slow to follow. These are more frequent and far-reaching in proportion as the race itself is changed; while they are rarer, and more gradual, so long as the people is more nearly akin to the first founders of the state. In England, where modifications of the stock have been slower and, up to now, less varied than in any other European country, we still see the institutions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries forming the base of the social structure. We find there, almost in its first vigour, the communal organization of the Plantagenets and the Tudors, the same method of giving the nobility a share in the government, the same gradations of rank in this nobility, the same respect for old families tempered with the same love of low-born merit. Since James I, however, and especially since the Union under Queen Anne, the English blood has been more and more prone to mingle with that of the Scotch and Irish, while other nations have also helped, by imperceptible degrees, to modify its purity. The result is that innovations have been more frequent in our time than ever before, though they have always remained fairly faithful to the spirit of the original constitution. In France, intermixture of race has been far more common and varied. In some cases, by a sudden turn of the wheel, power has even passed from one race to another. Further, on the social side, there have been complete changes rather than

modifications, and these were more or less far-reaching, as the groups that successively held the chief power were more or less different ... We cannot therefore admit that institutions make peoples what they are in cases where the peoples themselves have invented the institutions ...

7. RACE AND ENVIRONMENT

I MUST now consider whether the development of peoples is affected (as many writers have asserted) by climate, soil or geographical situation. And although I have briefly touched on this point in speaking of environment, I should be leaving a real gap in my theory if I did not discuss it more thoroughly.

Suppose that a nation lives in a temperate climate, which is not hot enough to sap its energies, or cold enough to make the soil unproductive; that its territory contains large rivers, wide roads suitable for traffic, plains and valleys capable of varied cultivation, and mountains filled with rich veins of ore – we are usually led to believe that a nation so favoured by nature will be quick to leave the stage of barbarism, and will pass, with no difficulty, to that of civilization. We are just as ready to admit, as a corollary, that the tribes which are burnt by the sun or numbed by the eternal ice will be much more liable to remain in a savage state, living as they do on nothing but barren rocks. It goes without saying, that on this hypothesis, mankind is capable of perfection only by the help of material nature, and that its value and greatness exist potentially outside itself. This view may seem attractive at first sight, but it has no support whatever from the facts of observation.

Nowhere is the soil more fertile, the climate milder, than

in certain parts of America. There is an abundance of great rivers. The gulfs, the bays, the harbours, are large, deep, magnificent and innumerable. Precious metals can be dug out almost at the surface of the ground. The vegetable world yields in abundance, and almost of its own accord, the necessaries of life in the most varied forms; while the animals, most of which are good for food, are a still more valuable source of wealth. And yet the greater part of this happy land has been occupied, for centuries, by peoples who have not succeeded, to the slightest extent, in exploiting their treasures ...

Indeed, civilization is quite independent of climate and soil, and their adaptability to man's wants. India and Egypt are both countries which have had to be artificially fertilized; yet they are famous centres of human culture and development. In China, certain regions are naturally fertile; but others have needed great labour to fit them for cultivation. Chinese history begins with the conquest of the rivers. The first benefits conferred by the ancient emperors were the opening of canals and the draining of marshes. In the country between the Euphrates and the Tigris, that beheld the splendour of the first Assyrian empire, and is the majestic scene of our most sacred recollections – in this region, where wheat is said to grow of its own accord, the soil is naturally so unproductive that vast works of irrigation, carried out in the teeth of every difficulty, have been needed to make it a fit abode for man. Now that the canals are destroyed or filled up, sterility has resumed its ancient reign. I am therefore inclined to believe that nature did not favour these regions as much as we are apt to think. But I will not discuss the point. I will grant, if you like, that China, Egypt, India and Assyria contained all the conditions of prosperity, and were eminently suited for the founding of powerful em-

pires and the development of great civilizations. But, we must also admit, these conditions were of such a kind that in order to receive any benefit from them the inhabitants must have reached beforehand, by other means, a high stage of social culture. Thus, for the commerce to be able to make use of the great waterways, manufactures, or at any rate agriculture, must have already existed; again, neighbouring peoples would not have been attracted to these great centres before towns and markets had grown up and prospered. Thus the great natural advantages of China, India and Assyria imply not only a considerable mental power on the part of the nations that profited by them, but even a civilization going back beyond the day when these advantages began to be exploited ...

It is not enough to show that a nation's value in the scale of civilization does not come from the fertility – or, to be more precise, the infertility – of the country where it happens to live. I must also prove that this value is quite independent of all the material conditions of environment. For example, the Armenians, shut up in their mountains – the same mountains where, for generations, so many other peoples have lived and died in barbarism – had already reached a high stage of civilization in a very remote age. Yet their country was almost entirely cut off from others; it had no communication with the sea, and could boast of no great fertility.

The Jews were in a similar position. They were surrounded by tribes speaking the dialects of a language cognate with their own, and for the most part closely connected with them in race; yet they outdistanced all these tribes. They became warriors, farmers and traders. Their method of government was extremely complicated; it was a mixture of monarchy and theocracy, of patriarchal and democratic rule (this last being represented by

the assemblies and the prophets), all in a curious equilibrium. Under this government they lived through long ages of prosperity and glory, and by a scientific system of emigration they conquered the difficulties that were put in the way of their expansion by the narrow limits of their territory. And what kind of territory was it? Modern travellers know what an amount of organized effort was required from the Israelite farmers, in order to keep up its artificial fertility. Since the chosen race ceased to dwell in the mountains and the plains of Palestine, the well where Jacob's flocks came down to drink has been filled up with sand, Naboth's vineyard has been invaded by the desert, and the bramble flourishes in the place where stood the palace of Ahab. And what did the Jews become, in this miserable corner of the earth? They became a people that succeeded in everything it undertook, a free, strong and intelligent people, and one which, before it lost, sword in hand, the name of an independent nation, had given as many learned men to the world as it had merchants ...

Coming down to modern history I am overwhelmed by the multitude of facts that support my theory. I see prosperity suddenly leaving the Mediterranean coasts, a clear proof that it was not inseparably attached to them. The great commercial cities of the Middle Ages grew up in places where no political philosopher of an earlier time would have thought of founding them. Novgorod rose in the midst of an ice-bound land; Bremen on a coast almost as cold. The Hanseatic towns in the centre of Germany were built in regions plunged, as it seemed, in immemorial slumber. Venice emerged from a deep gulf in the Adriatic. The balance of political power was shifted to places scarcely heard of before, but now gleaming with a new splendour. In France the whole strength was concentrated

to the north of the Loire, almost beyond the Seine. Lyons, Toulouse, Narbonne, Marseilles and Bordeaux fell from the high dignity to which they had been called by the Romans. It was Paris that became the important city, Paris, which was too far from the sea for purposes of trade, and which would soon prove too near to escape the invasions of the Norman pirates. In Italy, towns formerly of the lowest rank became greater than the city of the Popes. Ravenna rose from its marshes, Amalfi began its long career of power. Chance, I may remark, had no part in these changes, which can all be explained by the presence, at the given point, of a victorious or powerful race. In other words, a nation does not derive its value from its position; it never has and never will. On the contrary, it is the people which has always given – and always will give – to the land its moral, economic and political value ...

8. CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION

After my arguments on the subject of institutions and climates, I come to another, which I should really have put before all the rest; not that I think it stronger than they are, but because the facts on which it is based naturally command our reverence. If my conclusions in the preceding chapters are admitted, two points become increasingly evident: first, that most human races are for ever incapable of civilization, so long as they remain unmixed; secondly, that such races are not only without the inner impulse necessary to start them on the path of improvement, but also that no external force, however energetic in other respects, is powerful enough to turn their congenital barrenness into fertility. Here we shall be asked, no doubt, whether the light of Christianity is to shine in vain on

entire nations, and whether some peoples are doomed never to behold it at all.

Some writers have answered in the affirmative. They have not scrupled to contradict the promise of the Gospel, by denying the most characteristic feature of the new law, which is precisely that of being accessible to all men. Their view merely restates the old formula of the Hebrews, to which it returns by a little larger gate than that of the Old Covenant; but it returns all the same. I have no desire to follow the champions of this idea, which is condemned by the Church, nor have I the least difficulty in admitting that all human races are gifted with an equal capacity for being received into the bosom of the Christian Communion. Here there is no impediment arising from any original difference between races; for this purpose their inequalities are of no account. Religions and their followers are not, as has been assumed, distributed in zones over the surface of the earth. It is not true that Christianity must rule from this meridian to that, while from such and such a point Islam takes up the sceptre, holding it only as far as a certain impassable frontier, and then having to deliver it into the hands of Buddhism or Brahminism, while the fetichists of the tribe of Ham divide among themselves the rest of the world.

Christians are found in all latitudes and all climates. Statistics, inaccurate perhaps, but still approximately true, show us a vast number of them, Mongols wandering in the plains of Upper Asia, savages hunting on the tableland of the Cordilleras, Eskimos fishing in the ice of the Arctic circle, even Chinese and Japanese dying under the scourge of the persecutor. The least observation will show this, and will also prevent us from falling into the very common error of confusing the universal power of recognizing the truths of Christianity and following its precepts,

with the very different faculty that leads one human race, and not another, to understand the earthly conditions of social improvement, and to be able to pass from one rung of the ladder to another, so as to reach finally the state which we call *civilization*. The rungs of this ladder are the measure of the inequality of human races ...

We are right in calling Christianity a civilizing power – but only within certain limits; if we take the words in too wide a sense, we shall find ourselves drawn into a maze of error. Christianity is a civilizing force in so far as it makes a man better minded and better mannered; yet it is only indirectly so, for it has no idea of applying this improvement in morals and intelligence to the perishable things of this world, and it is always content with the social conditions in which it finds its neophytes, however imperfect the conditions may be. So long as it can pull out the noxious weeds that stifle the well-being of the soul, it is indifferent to everything else. It leaves all men as it finds them – the Chinese in his robes, the Eskimo in his furs, the first eating rice, and the second eating whale-blubber. It does not require them to change their way of life. If their state can be improved as a direct consequence of their conversion, then Christianity will certainly do its best to bring such an improvement about; but it will not try to alter a single custom, and certainly will not force any advance from one civilization to another, for it has not yet adopted one itself. It uses all civilizations and is above all ... No civilization whatever has excited its envy or contempt; and because of this rare impartiality, and the consequences that were to flow from it, the law could rightly call itself 'Catholic', or universal. It does not belong exclusively to any civilization. It did not come to bless any one form of earthly existence; it rejects none, and would purify all ... Christianity is thus not a civilizing power in

the ordinary sense of the word; it can be embraced by the most different races without stunting their growth, or making demands on them that they cannot fulfil ... Even as a matter of justice we must leave Christianity absolutely out of the present question. If all races are equally capable of receiving its benefits, it cannot have been sent to bring equality among men. Its kingdom, we may say, is in the most literal sense 'not of this world' ...

* * *

I know that some learned men have asserted that between some human races and the larger apes there is only a slight difference of degree, and none of kind. As I absolutely reject such an insult to humanity, I may be also allowed to take no notice of the exaggerations by which it is usually answered. I believe, of course, that human races are unequal; but I do not think that any of them are like the brute, or to be classed with it. The lowest tribe, the most backward and miserable variety of the human species, is at least capable of imitation; and I have no doubt that if we take one of the most hideous bushmen, we could develop – I do not say in him, if he is already grown up, but in his son or at any rate his grandson – sufficient intelligence to make his acts correspond to a certain degree of civilization, even if this required some conscious effort of study on his part. Are we to infer that the people to which he belongs could be civilized on our model? This would be a hasty and superficial conclusion. From the practice of the arts and professions invented under an advanced civilization, it is a far cry to that civilization itself. Further, though the Protestant missionaries are an indispensable link between the savage tribe and the central civilizing power, is it certain that these missionaries are equal to the task im-

posed on them? Are they the masters of a complete system of social science? I doubt it. If communications were suddenly cut off between the American Government and its spiritual legates among the Cherokees, the traveller would find in the native farms, at the end of a few years, some new practices that he had not expected. These would result from the mixture of white and Indian blood; and our traveller would look in vain for anything more than a very pale copy of what is taught at New York.

We often hear of Negroes who have learnt music, who are clerks in banking houses, and who know how to read, write, count, dance and speak like white men. People are astonished at this, and conclude that the Negro is capable of everything! And then, in the same breath, they will express surprise at the contrast between the Slav civilization and our own. The Russians, Poles and Serbians (they will say), even though they are far nearer to us than the Negroes, are only civilized on the surface; the higher classes alone participate in our ideas, owing to the continual admixture of English, French and German blood. The masses, on the other hand, are invincibly ignorant of the Western world and its movements, although they have been Christian for so many centuries – in many cases before we were converted ourselves! The solution is simple. There is a great difference between imitation and conviction. Imitation does not necessarily imply a serious breach with hereditary instincts; but no one has a real part in any civilization until he is able to make progress by himself, without direction from others ...

You may search through all the pages of history, and you will not find a single people that has attained to European civilization by adopting Christianity, or has been brought by the great fact of its conversion to civilize itself

when it was not civilized already. Once more, Christianity is not a civilizing power, and has excellent reasons for not being so.

9. THE MEANING OF CIVILIZATION

HERE I must enter on a digression vital to my argument. At every turn I am using a word involving a circle of ideas which it is very necessary to define. I am continually speaking of 'civilization', and cannot help doing so; for it is only by the existence in some measure, or the complete absence, of this attribute that I can gauge the relative merits of the different races. I refer both to European civilization and to others which may be distinguished from it ... Guizot, if I may be allowed to dispute his great authority, begins his *History of Civilization in Europe* by a confusion of terms which leads him into serious error. He calls civilization an *event* ... Civilization is not an event, it is a *series*, a *chain* of events linked more or less logically together and brought about by the interaction of ideas which are often themselves very complex. There is a continual bringing to birth of further ideas and events. The result is sometimes incessant movement, sometimes stagnation. In either case, civilization is not an event, but an assemblage of events and ideas, a *state* in which a human society subsists, an *environment* with which it has managed to surround itself, which is created by it, emanates from it, and in turn reacts on it.

This state is universal in a sense in which an event never is. It admits of many variations which it could not survive if it were merely an event. Further, it is quite independent of all forms of government; it makes as much progress under a despotism as under the freest democracy, and it does not cease to exist when the conditions of political

life are modified or even absolutely changed by civil war.

This does not mean that we may more or less neglect the forms of government. They are intimately bound up with the health of the social organism; its prosperity is impaired or destroyed if the choice of government is bad, favoured and developed if the choice is good. But we are not concerned here with mere questions of prosperity. Our subject is more serious. It deals with the very existence of peoples and of civilization; and civilization has to do with certain elemental conditions which are independent of politics, and have to look far deeper for the motive forces that bring them into being, direct, and expand them, make them fruitful or barren and, in a word, mould their whole life. In face of such root questions as these, considerations of government, prosperity and misery naturally take a second place. The first place is always and everywhere held by the question 'to be or not to be', which is as supreme for a people as for an individual ...

* * *

There is no tribe so degraded that we cannot discover in it the instinct to satisfy both its material and its moral needs. The first and most obvious difference between races lies in the various ways in which the two sides of this instinct are balanced. Among the most primitive peoples they are never of equal intensity. In some, the sense of the physical need is uppermost, in others, the tendency to contemplation. Thus the brutish hordes of the yellow race seem to be dominated by the needs of the body, though they are not quite without gleams of a spiritual world. On the other hand to most of the Negro tribes that have reached the same stage of development, action is less than

thought, and the imagination gives a higher value to the things unseen than those that can be handled. From the point of view of civilization, I do not regard this as a reason for placing the Negroes on a higher level; for the experience of centuries shows that they are no more capable of being civilized than the others. Ages have passed without their doing anything to improve their condition; they are all equally powerless to mingle act and idea in sufficient strength to burst their prison walls and emerge from their degradation. But even in the lowest stages of human progress I always find this twofold stream of instinct, in which now one, now the other current predominates ...

Above the Samoyedes, as above some of the Polynesian Negroes, come the tribes that are not quite content with a hut made of branches or with force as the only social relation, but desire something better. These tribes are raised one step above absolute barbarism. If they belong to those races to whom action is more than thought, we shall see them improving their tools, their arms and their ornaments, setting up a government in which the warriors are more important than the priests, developing ideas of exchange, and already showing a fair aptitude for commerce. Their wars will still be cruel, but will tend more and more to become mere pillaging expeditions; in fact, material comfort and physical enjoyment will be the main aim of the people. I find this picture realized in many of the Mongolian tribes; also, in a higher form, among the Quichuas and Aymaras of Peru. The opposite condition, involving a great detachment from mere bodily needs, will be found among the Dahomeys of West Africa, and the Kaffirs.

I leave the groups in which the social system is not strong enough to impose itself over a large population, even after a fusion of blood. I pass to those in which the

racial elements are so strong that they grip fast everything that comes within their reach, and draw it into themselves; they found over immense tracts of territory a supreme dominion resting on a basis of ideas and actions that are more or less perfectly co-ordinated. For the first time we have reached what can be called a *civilization* ... From the moment when an assemblage of men, which began as a mere tribe, has so widened the horizon of its social relations as to merit the name of a *people*, we see one of the two currents of instinct, the material and the intellectual, flowing with greater force than before, according as the separate groups, now fused together, were originally borne along by one or the other. Thus, different results will follow, and different qualities of a nation will come to the surface, according as the power of thought or that of action is dominant. We may use here the Hindu symbolism, and represent what I call the 'intellectual current' by Prakriti, the female principle, and the 'material current' by Purusha, the male principle. There is, of course, no blame or praise attaching to either of these phrases; they merely imply that the one principle is fertilized by the other.

Further, we can see, at some periods of a people's existence, a strong oscillation between the two principles, one of which alternately prevails over the other. These changes depend on the mingling of blood that inevitably takes place at various times. Their consequences are very important, and sensibly alter the character of the civilization by impairing its stability.

I can thus divide peoples into two classes, as they come predominantly under the action of one or other of these currents; though the division is, of course, in no way absolute. At the head of the male category I put the Chinese; the Hindus being the prototype of the opposite class.

After the Chinese come most of the peoples of ancient Italy, the Romans of the Early Republic, and the Germanic tribes. In the opposite camp are ranged the nations of Egypt and Assyria. They take their place behind the men of Hindustan.

When we follow the nations down the ages, we find that the civilization of nearly all of them has been modified by their oscillation between the two principles. The peoples of northern China were at first almost entirely materialistic. By a gradual fusion with tribes of different blood, especially those in the Yunnan, their outlook became less purely utilitarian. The reason why this development has been arrested, or at least has been very slow, for centuries past, is because the male constituents of the population are far greater in quantity than the slight female element in its blood.

In northern Europe the materialistic strain, contributed by the best of the Germanic tribes, has been continually strengthened by the influx of Celts and Slavs. But as the white peoples drifted more and more towards the south, the male influences gradually lost their force and were absorbed by an excess of female elements, which finally triumphed. We must allow some exceptions to this, for example in Piedmont and northern Spain.

Passing now to the other division, we see that the Hindus have in a high degree the feeling of the supernatural, that they are more given to meditation than to action. As their earliest conquests brought them mainly into contact with races organized along the same lines as themselves, the male principle could not be sufficiently developed among them. In such an environment their civilization was not able to advance on the material side as it had on the intellectual. We may contrast the ancient Romans, who were naturally materialistic, and only ceased to be so after

a complete fusion with Greeks, Africans and Orientals had changed their original nature and given them a totally new temperament. The internal development of the Greeks resembled that of the Hindus.

I conclude from such facts as these that every human activity, moral or intellectual, has its original source in one or other of these two currents, male or female; and only the races which have one of these elements in abundance (without, of course, being quite destitute of the other) can reach, in their social life, a satisfactory stage of culture, and so attain to civilization.

When a nation, belonging to either the male or female series, has the civilizing instinct so strongly that it can impose its laws on vast multitudes of men; when it is so fortunate as to be able to satisfy their inner needs, and appeal to their hearts as well as their heads; from this moment a culture is brought into being. This general appeal is the essential note of the civilizing instinct, and its greatest glory. This alone makes it a living and active force. The interests of individuals only flourish in isolation; and social life always tends, to some extent, to mutilate them. For a system of ideas to be really fruitful and convincing, it must suit the particular ways of thought and feeling current among the people to whom it is offered.

When some special point of view is accepted by the mass of a people as the basis of their legislation, it is really because it fulfils, in the main, their most cherished desires. The male nations look principally for material well-being, the female nations are more taken up with the needs of the imagination; but, I repeat, as soon as the multitudes enrol themselves under a banner, or – to speak more exactly – as soon as a particular form of administration is accepted, a civilization is born.

Another invariable mark of civilization is the need that is

felt for stability. This follows immediately from what I have said above; for the moment that men have admitted, as a community, that some special principle is to govern and unite them, and have consented to make individual sacrifices to bring this about, their first impulse is to respect the governing principle – as much for what it brings as for what it demands – and to declare it unshakeable. The purer a race keeps its blood, the less will its social foundations be liable to attack; for the general way of thought will remain the same. Yet the desire for stability cannot be entirely satisfied for long. The admixture of blood will be followed by some modifications in the fundamental ideas of the people, and these again by an itch for change in the building itself. Such change will sometimes mean real progress, especially in the dawn of a civilization, when the governing principle is usually rigid and absolute, owing to the exclusive predominance of some single race. Later, the tinkering will become incessant, as the mass is more heterogeneous and loses its singleness of aim; and the community will not always be able to congratulate itself on the result. So long, however, as it remains under the guidance of the original impulse, it will not cease, while holding fast to the idea of bettering its condition, to follow a chimera of stability. Fickle, unstable, changing every hour, it yet thinks itself eternal, and marches on, as towards some goal in Paradise. It clings to the doctrine (even while continually denying it in practice) that one of the chief marks of civilization is to borrow a part of God's immutability for the profit of man. When the likeness obviously does not exist, it takes courage, and consoles itself by the conviction that soon, at any rate, it will attain the divine attribute.

By the side of stability, and the co-operation of individual interests, which touch each other without being

destroyed, we must put a third and a fourth characteristic of civilization, sociability, and the hatred of violence – in other words the demand that the head, and not the fists, shall be used for self-defence.

These last two features are the source of all mental improvement, and so of all material progress; it is to these especially that we look for the evidence as to whether a society is advanced or not. It is also in connection with these that we find the main cause of the false judgments passed on foreign peoples. Because the externals of their civilization are unlike the corresponding parts of our own, we are often apt to infer hastily that they are either barbarians or of less worth than ourselves. Nothing could be more superficial, and so more doubtful, than a conclusion drawn from such premises.

I think I may now sum up my view of civilization by defining it as *a state of relative stability, where the mass of men try to satisfy their wants by peaceful means, and are refined in their conduct and intelligence*. Assuming that these conditions are fulfilled, we must now inquire whether all civilizations are equal. I think not. The social needs of the chief peoples are not felt with the same intensity or directed towards the same objects; thus their conduct and intelligence will show great differences in kind, as well as in degree ...

Our civilization has been created by the mingling of the Germanic tribes with the races of the ancient world, the union, that is to say, of pre-eminently male groups with races and fragments of races clinging to the decayed remnants of the ancient ideas. The richness, variety and fertility of invention for which we honour our modern societies, are the natural, and more or less successful, result of the maimed and disparate elements which our Germanic ancestors instinctively knew how to use, temper and disguise.

Our own kind of culture has two general marks, wherever it is found; it has been touched, however superficially, by the Germanic element, and it is Christian. This second characteristic (to repeat what I have said already) is more marked than the other, and leaps first to the eye, because it is an outward feature of our modern state, a sort of varnish on its surface; but it is not absolutely essential, as many nations are Christian – and still more might become Christian – without forming a part of our circle of civilization. The first characteristic is, on the contrary, positive and decisive. Where the Germanic element has never penetrated, our special kind of civilization does not exist.

This naturally brings me to the question whether we can call our European societies entirely civilized; whether the ideas and actions that appear on the surface have the roots of their being deep down in the mass of the people, and therefore whether their effects correspond with the instincts of the greatest number. This leads to a further question: do the lower strata of our population think and act in accordance with what we call European civilization?

Many have admired, and with good reason, the extraordinary unity of ideas and views that guided the whole body of citizens in the Greek states of the best period. The conclusions on every essential point were often hostile to each other; but they all derived from the same source. From the time of the Punic Wars among the Romans, and from that of Pericles, and especially of Philip, among the Greeks, this uniformity tended more and more to break down. The mixture of nations brought with it a mixture of civilizations. The result was a very complex and learned society, with a culture far more refined than before. But it had one striking disadvantage; both in Italy and in Hellas, it existed merely for the upper classes, the lower strata

being left quite ignorant of its nature, its merits and its aims. Roman civilization after the great Asiatic wars was, no doubt, a powerful manifestation of human genius; but it really embraced none but the Greek rhetoricians who supplied its philosophical basis, the Syrian lawyers who built up for it an atheistic legal system, the rich men who were engaged in public administration or money-making, and finally the leisured voluptuaries who did nothing at all. By the masses it was, at all times, merely tolerated. The peoples of Europe understood nothing of its Asiatic and African elements, those of Egypt had no better idea of what it brought them from Gaul and Spain, those of Numidia had no appreciation of what came to them from the rest of the world. Thus, below what we might call the social classes, lived innumerable multitudes who had a different civilization from that of the official world, or were not civilized at all. Only the minority of the Roman people held the secret, and attached any importance to it. We have here the example of a civilization that is accepted and dominant, no longer through the convictions of the peoples who live under it but by their exhaustion, their weakness and their indifference.

In China we find the exact contrary. The territory is of course immense, but from one end to the other there is the same spirit among the native Chinese – I leave the rest out of account – and the same grasp of their civilization. Whatever its principles may be, whether we approve of its aims or not, we must admit that the part played by the masses in their civilization shows how well they understand it ... There is a strong instinct of repulsion against radical changes in the government. A very trustworthy critic on this point, Mr John F. Davis, the British Commissioner in China, who has not only lived in Canton but has studied its affairs with the closest application,

says that the Chinese are a people whose history does not show a single attempt at a social revolution, or any alteration in the outward forms of power. In his opinion, they are best described as 'a nation of steady conservatives'.

The contrast is very striking when we turn to the civilization of the Roman world, where changes of government followed each other with startling rapidity right up to the coming of the northern peoples. Everywhere in this great society, and at every time, we can find populations so detached from the existing order as to be ready for the wildest experiments. Nothing was left untried in this long period, no principle respected. Property, religion, the family were all called in question, and many, both in the north and south, were inclined to put the novel theories into practice. Absolutely nothing in the Graeco-Roman world rested on a solid foundation, not even the unity of the empire, so necessary one would think for the general safety. Further, it was not only the armies, with their hosts of improvised Caesars, who were continually battering at this Palladium of society; the emperors themselves, beginning with Diocletian, had so little belief in the monarchy that they established of their own accord a division of power. At last there were four rulers at once. Not a single institution, not a single principle, was fixed, in this unhappy society, which had no better reason for continuing to exist than the physical impossibility of deciding on which rock it should founder; until the moment came when it was crushed in the vigorous arms of the north, and forced at last to become something definite.

Thus we find a complete opposition between these two great societies, the Celestial and the Roman Empires. To the civilization of eastern Asia I will add that of the Brahmins, which is also of extraordinary strength and

universality. If in China everyone, or nearly everyone, has reached a certain level of knowledge, the same is the case among the Hindus. Each man, according to his caste, shares in a spirit that has lasted for ages, and knows exactly what he ought to learn, think and believe. Among the Buddhists of Tibet and other parts of Upper Asia, nothing is rarer than a peasant who cannot read. Everyone has similar convictions on the important matters of life.

Do we find the same uniformity among Europeans? The question is not worth asking. The Graeco-Roman civilization has no definitely marked hue, either throughout the nations as a whole, or even within the same people. I need not speak of Russia or most of the Austrian states; the proof would be too easy. But consider Germany or Italy (especially south Italy); Spain shows a similar picture, though in fainter lines; France is in the same position as Spain.

Take the case of France. I will not confine myself to the fact, which always strikes the most superficial observer, that between Paris and the rest of France there is an impassable gulf, and that at the very gates of the capital a new nation begins, which is quite different from that living within the walls. On this point there is no room for doubt, and those who base their conclusions, as to the unity of ideas and the fusion of blood, on the formal unity of our government, are under a great illusion.

Not a single social law or root principle of civilization is understood in the same way in all our departments. I do not refer merely to the peoples of Normandy, Brittany, Anjou, Limousin, Gascony and Provence; everyone knows how little one is like the other, and how they vary in their opinions. The important point is that, while in China, Tibet and India the ideas essential to the maintenance of

civilization are familiar to all classes, this is not at all the case among ourselves. The most elementary and accessible facts are sealed mysteries to most of our rural populations, who are absolutely indifferent to them; for usually they can neither read nor write, and have no wish to learn. They cannot see the use of such knowledge, nor the possibility of applying it ...

The lower strata of the French people have very little in common with the surface. They form an abyss over which civilization is suspended, and the deep stagnant waters, sleeping at the bottom of the gulf, will one day show their power of dissolving all that comes in their way. The most tragic crises of her history have deluged the country with blood, without the agricultural population playing any part except that which was forced on it. Where its immediate interests were not engaged, it let the storms pass by without troubling itself in the least. Those who are astonished and scandalized by such callousness say that the peasant is essentially immoral – which is both unjust and untrue. The peasants look on us almost in the light of enemies. They understand nothing of our civilization, they share in it unwillingly, and think themselves justified in profiting, as far as they can, by its misfortunes. If we put aside this antagonism, which is sometimes active but generally inert, we need not hesitate to allow them some high moral qualities, however strangely these may, at times, be manifested.

I may apply to the whole of Europe what I have just said of France, and conclude that modern civilization includes far more than it absorbs; in this it resembles the Roman Empire. Hence one cannot be confident that our state of society will last; and I see a clear proof of this in the smallness of its hold even over the classes raised a little above the country population. Our civilization may be

compared to the temporary islands thrown up in the sea by submarine volcanoes. Exposed as they are to the destructive action of the currents, and robbed of the forces that first kept them in position, they will one day break up, and their fragments will be hurled into the gulf of the all-conquering waves. It is a sad end, and one which many noble races before ourselves have had to meet. The blow cannot be turned aside; it is inevitable. The wise man may see it coming, but can do nothing more. The most consummate statesmanship is not able for one moment to counteract the immutable laws of the world ...

I may add, finally, that the active element distinguishing any civilization is identical with the most striking quality, whatever it may be, of the dominant race. The civilization is modified and transformed according to the changes undergone by this race, and, when the race itself has disappeared, it carries on for some time the impulse originally received therefrom. Thus the kind of order kept in any society is the best index to the special capacities of the people and to the stage of progress to which they have attained: it is the clearest mirror in which their individuality can be reflected.

10. THE SEPARATION OF RACES

My next step must be to study the natural and unvarying phenomenon which I have identified as the latent cause of the life and death of societies. This, as I have said, consists in the relative worth of the different races. Logic requires me to make clear at once what I understand by the word *race*.

We must first discuss the word in its physiological sense. A good many observers, who judge by first impressions

and so take extreme views, assert that there are such radical and essential differences between human families that one must refuse them any identity of origin. The writers who adhere to such a notion assume many other genealogies by the side of that from Adam. To them there is no original unity in the species, or rather there is no single species; there are three or four, or even more, which produce perfectly distinct types, and these again have united to form hybrids. The supporters of this theory easily win belief by citing the clear and striking differences between certain human groups ...

The great scientific stronghold of the unitarians is the ease with which the different branches of the human family create hybrids, and the fertility of these hybrids. The observations of naturalists seem to prove that, in the animal or vegetable world, hybrids can be produced only from allied species, and that, even so, they are condemned to barrenness. It has also been observed that between related species intercourse, although possibly fertile, is repugnant, and usually has to be effected by trickery or force. This would tend to show that in the free state the number of hybrids is even more limited than when controlled by man. We may conclude that the power of producing fertile offspring is among the marks of a distinct species. As nothing leads us to believe that the human race is outside this rule, there is no answer to this argument ...

The unitarians say that the separation of the races is merely apparent, and due to local influences, such as are still at work, or to accidental variations of shape in the ancestor of some particular branch. All mankind is, for them, capable of the same improvement; the original type, though more or less disguised, persists in unabated strength and the Negro, the American savage, the Tungusian of

northern Siberia, can attain a beauty of outline equal to that of the European, and would do so, if they were brought up under similar conditions. This theory cannot be accepted.

We have seen above that the strongest scientific rampart of the unitarians lay in the fertility of human hybrids. Up to now, this has been very difficult to refute, but perhaps it will not always be so; at any rate, I should not think it worth while to pause over this argument if it were not supported by another, of a very different kind, which, I confess, gives me more concern. It is said that Genesis does not admit of a multiple origin for our species.

If the text is clear, positive, peremptory and incontestable, we must bow our heads; the greatest doubts must yield, reason can only declare herself imperfect and inferior, the origin of mankind is single and everything that seems to prove the contrary is merely a delusive appearance. It is better to let darkness gather round a point of scholarship, than to enter the lists against such an authority. But if the Bible is not explicit, if the Holy Scriptures, which were written to shed light on quite other questions than those of race, have been misunderstood, and if without doing them violence one can draw a different meaning from them, then I shall not hesitate to go forward.

We must, of course, acknowledge that Adam is the ancestor of the white race. The Scriptures are evidently meant to be so understood, for the generations deriving from him are certainly white. This being admitted, there is nothing to show that, in the view of the first compilers of the Adamite genealogies, those outside the white race were counted as part of the species at all. Not a word is said about the yellow races, and it is only an arbitrary interpretation of the text that makes us regard the patriarch Ham as black. Of course the translators and commentators,

in calling Adam the common ancestor of all men, have had to enrol among his descendants all the peoples who have lived since his time. According to them, the European nations are of the stock of Japhet, hither Asia was occupied by the Semites, and the regions of Africa by the Hamites, who are, as I say, unreasonably considered to be of Negro origin. The whole scheme fits admirably together – for one part of the world. But what about the other part? It is simply left out.

For the moment, I do not insist on this line of argument. I do not wish to run counter to even literal interpretations of the text, if they are generally accepted. I will merely point out that we might, perhaps, doubt their value, without going beyond the limits imposed by the Church; and then I will ask whether we may admit the basic principle of the unitarians, such as it is, and yet somehow explain the facts otherwise than they do. In other words, I will simply ask whether independently of any question of an original unity or multiplicity, there may not exist the most radical and far-reaching differences, both physical and moral, between human races ...

The different races have never doubted that the original ancestor of the whole species had precisely their own characteristics. On this point, and this alone, tradition is unanimous. The white peoples have made for themselves an Adam and an Eve that Blumenbach would have called Caucasian; whereas in the *Arabian Nights* – a book which, though apparently trivial, is a mine of true sayings and well-observed facts – we read that some Negroes regard Adam and his wife as black, and since these were created in the image of God, God must also be black and the angels too, while the prophet of God was naturally too near divinity to show a white skin to his disciples.

Unhappily, modern science has been able to provide no

clue to the labyrinth of the various opinions. No likely hypothesis has succeeded in lightening this darkness, and in all probability the human races are as different from their common ancestor, if they have one, as they are from each other. I will therefore assume without discussion the principle of unity; and my only task, in the narrow and limited field to which I am confining myself, is to explain the actual deviation from the primitive type.

The causes are very hard to disentangle. The theory of the unitarians attributes the deviation, as I have already said, to habits, climate and locality. It is impossible to agree with this. Changes have certainly been brought about in the constitution of races, since the dawn of history, by such external influences; but they do not seem to have been important enough to be able to explain fully the many vital divergences that exist. This will become clear in a moment.

I will suppose that there are two tribes which still bear a resemblance to the primitive type, and happen to be living, the one in a mountainous country in the interior of a continent, the other on an island in the midst of the ocean. The atmosphere and the food conditions of each will be quite different. I will assume that the one has many ways of obtaining food, the other very few. Further, I will place the former in a cold climate, the second under a tropical sun. By this means the external contrast between them will be complete. The course of time will add its own weight to the action of the natural forces, and there is no doubt that the two groups will gradually accumulate some special characteristics which will distinguish them from each other. But even after many centuries no vital or organic change will have taken place in their constitution. This is proved by the fact that we find peoples of a very similar type, living on opposite sides of the world and

under quite different conditions, of climate and everything else ...

I would not, however, deny that local conditions may favour the deepening of some particular skin colour, the tendency to obesity, the development of the chest muscles, the lengthening of the arms or the lower limbs, the increase or decrease of physical strength. But, I repeat, these are not essential points; and to judge from the very slight difference made by the alteration of local conditions in the shape of the body, there is no reason to believe that they have ever had very much influence. This is an argument of considerable weight.

Although we do not know what cataclysmic changes may have been effected in the physical organization of the races before the dawn of history, we may at least observe that this period extends only to about half the age attributed to our species. If for three or four thousand years the darkness is impenetrable, we still have another period of three thousand years, of which we can go right back to the beginning in the case of certain nations. Everything tends to show that the races which were then known, and which have remained relatively pure since that time, have not greatly changed in their outward appearance, although some of them no longer live in the same places, and so are no longer affected by the same external causes ...

The Jews, for example, have settled in lands with very different climates from that of Palestine, and have given up their ancient mode of life. The Jewish type has, however, remained much the same; the modifications it has undergone are of no importance and have never been enough, in any country or latitude, to change the general character of the race. The warlike Rechabites of the Arabian desert, the peaceful Portuguese, French, German

and Polish Jews – they all look alike. I have had the opportunity of examining closely one of the last kind. His features and profile clearly betrayed his origin. His eyes especially were unforgettable. This denizen of the north, whose immediate ancestors had lived, for many generations, in the snow, seemed to have been just tanned by the rays of the Syrian sun. The Semitic face looks exactly the same, in its main characteristic, as it appears on the Egyptian paintings of three or four thousand years ago, and more; and we find it also, in an equally striking and recognizable form, under the most varied and disparate conditions of climate. The identity of descendant and ancestor does not stop at the features; it continues also in the shape of the limbs and the temperament. The German Jews are usually smaller and more slender in build than the men of European race among whom they have lived for centuries. Further, the marriageable age is much earlier among them than among their fellow-countrymen of another race ...

The reader will not fail to see that the question on which the argument here turns is that of the permanence of types. If we have shown that the human races are each, as it were, shut up in their own individuality, and can issue from it only by a mixture of blood, the unitarian theory will find itself very hard pressed. It will have to recognize that, if the types are thus absolutely fixed, hereditary and *permanent*, in spite of climate and lapse of time, mankind is no less completely and definitely split into separate parts, than it would be if specific differences were due to a real divergence of origin ...

Whatever side one may take in the controversy as to the unity or multiplicity of origin possessed by the human species, it is certain that the different families are today absolutely separate; for there is no external influence that

could cause any resemblance between them or force them into a homogeneous mass.

The existing races constitute separate branches of one or many primitive stocks. These stocks have now vanished. They are not known in historical times at all, and we cannot form even the most general idea of their qualities. They differed from each other in the shape and proportion of the limbs, the structure of the skull, the internal conformation of the body, the nature of the capillary system, the colour of the skin, and the like; and they never succeeded in losing their characteristic features except under the powerful influence of the crossing of blood.

This permanence of racial qualities is quite sufficient to generate the radical unlikeness and inequality that exists between the different branches, to raise them to the dignity of natural laws, and to justify the same distinctions being drawn with regard to the physiological life of nations, as I shall show, later, to be applicable to their moral life.

Owing to my respect for a scientific authority which I cannot overthrow, and, still more, for a religious interpretation that I could not venture to attack, I must resign myself to leaving on one side the grave doubts that are always oppressing me as to the question of original unity; and I will now try to discover as far as I can, with the resources that are still left to me, the probable causes of these ultimate physiological differences.

As no one will venture to deny, there broods over this grave question a mysterious darkness, big with causes that are at the same time physical and supernatural. In the inmost recesses of the obscurity that shrouds the problem reign the causes which have their ultimate home in the mind of God; the human spirit feels their presence without divining their nature, and shrinks back in awful reverence. It is probable that the earthly agents to whom

we look for the key of the secret are themselves but instruments and petty springs in the great machine. The origins of all things, of all events and movements, are not infinitely small, as we are often pleased to say, but on the contrary so vast, so immeasurable by the poor foot rule of man's intelligence, that while we may perhaps have some vague suspicion of their existence, we can never hope to lay hands on them or attain to any sure discovery of their nature. Just as in an iron chain that is meant to lift up a great weight it frequently happens that the link nearest the object is the smallest, so the proximate cause may often seem insignificant; and if we merely consider it in isolation, we tend to forget the long series that has gone before. This alone gives it meaning, but this, in all its strength and might, derives from something that human eye has never seen. We must not therefore, like the fool in the old adage, wonder at the power of the roseleaf to make the water overflow; we should rather think that the reason of the accident lay in the depths of the water that filled the vessel to overflowing. Let us yield all respect to the primal and generating causes, that dwell far off in heaven, and without which nothing would exist; conscious of the divine power that moves them, they rightly claim a part of the veneration we pay to their Infinite Creator. But let us abstain from speaking of them here. It is not fitting for us to leave the human sphere, where alone we may hope to meet with certainty. All we can do is to seize the chain, if not by the last small link, at any rate by that part of it which we can see and touch, without trying to catch at what is beyond our reach – a task too difficult for mortal man. There is no irreverence in saying this; on the contrary, it expresses the sincere conviction of a weakness that is insurmountable.

Man is a newcomer in this world. Geology – proceeding merely by induction, but attacking its problems in a

marvellously systematic way—asserts that man is absent from all the oldest strata of the earth's surface. There is no trace of him among the fossils. When our ancestors appeared for the first time in an already aged world, God, according to Scripture, told them that they would be its masters and have dominion over everything on earth. This promise was given not so much to them as to their descendants; for these first feeble creatures seem to have been provided with very few means, not merely of conquering the whole of nature, but even of resisting its weakest attacks...

Differences of climate and environment acted on our first parents far more effectively than today. Cuvier, in his *Treatise on the Revolutions of the Globe*, says that the inorganic forces of the present day would be quite incapable of causing convulsions and upheavals, or new arrangements on the earth's surface, such as those to which geology bears witness. The changes that were wrought in the past on her own body by the awful might of nature would be impossible today; she had a similar power over the human race, but has it no longer. Her omnipotence has been so lost, or at least so weakened and whittled away, that in a period of years covering roughly half the life of our species on the earth, she has brought about no change of any importance, much less one that can be compared to that by which the different races were for ever marked off from each other.

Two points are certain: first that the main differences between the branches of our race were fixed in the earliest epoch of our terrestrial life; secondly, that in order to imagine a period when these physiological cleavages could have been brought about, we must go back to the time when the influence of natural causes was far more active than it is now, under the normal and healthy conditions. Such a time could be none other than that immediately

after the creation, when the earth was still shaken by its recent catastrophes and without any defence against the fearful effects of their last death-throes.

Assuming the unitarian theory, we cannot give any later date for the separation of types.

To summarize: in face of the difficulties offered by the most liberal interpretation of the biblical text, and the objection founded on the law regulating the generation of hybrids, it is impossible to pronounce categorically in favour of a multiplicity of origin for the human species.

We must therefore be content to assign a lower cause to those clear-cut varieties of which the main quality is undoubtedly their permanence, a permanence that can only be lost by a crossing of blood. We can identify this cause with the amount of climatic energy possessed by the earth at a time when the human race had just appeared on its surface. There is no doubt that the forces that inorganic nature could bring into play were far greater then than anything we have known since, and under their pressure racial modifications were accomplished which would now be impossible. Probably, too, the creatures exposed to these tremendous forces were more liable to be affected by them than existing types would be. Man, in his earliest stages, assumed many unstable forms; he did not perhaps belong, in any definite manner, to the white, red or yellow variety. The deviations that transformed the primitive characteristics of the species into the types established today were probably much smaller than those that would now be required for the black race, for example, to become assimilated to the white, or the yellow to the black. On this hypothesis, we should have to regard Adamite man as equally different from all the existing human groups; these would have radiated all around him, the distance between him and any group being double that between

one group and another. How much of the primitive type could the peoples of the different races have subsequently retained? Merely the most general characteristic of our species, the vague resemblances of shape common to the most distant groups, and the possibility of expressing their wants by articulate sounds – but nothing more. The remaining features peculiar to primitive man would have been completely lost, by the black as well as the non-black races; and although we are all originally descended from him, we should have owed to outside influences everything that gave us our distinctive and special character. Henceforth the human races, the product of cosmic forces as well as of the primitive Adamic stock, would be very slightly, if at all, related to each other. The power of giving birth to fertile hybrids would certainly be a perpetual proof of original connection; but it would be the only one. As soon as the primal differences of environment had given each group its isolated character, as a possession for ever – its shape, features, and colour – from that moment the link of primal unity would have been suddenly snapped; the unity, so far as influence on racial development went, would be actually sterile. The strict and unassailable permanence of form and feature to which the earliest historical documents bear witness would be the charter and sign-manual of the eternal separation of races.

11. THE INEQUALITY OF RACES

It is in the manner described in the last chapter that the secondary types, from which are descended the existing races, could have come into being. As to the type of man first created, the Adamite, we will leave him out of the argument altogether; for it is impossible to know anything

of his specific character, or how far each of the later families has kept or lost its likeness to him. Our investigation will not take us further back than the races of the second stage.

I find these races naturally divided into three, and three only – the white, the black and the yellow. If I use a basis of division suggested by the colour of the skin, it is not that I consider it either correct or happy, for the three categories of which I speak are not distinguished exactly by colour, which is a very complex and variable thing; I have already said that certain facts in the conformation of the skeleton are far more important. But in default of inventing new names – which I do not consider myself justified in doing – I must make my choice from the vocabulary already in use. The terms may not be very good, but they are at any rate less open to objection than any others, especially if they are carefully defined. I certainly prefer them to all the designations taken from geography or history, for these have thrown an already confused subject into further confusion. So I may say, once for all, that I understand by *white* men the members of those races which are also called Caucasian, Semitic or Japhetic. By *black* men I mean the Hamites; by *yellow* the Altaic, Mongol, Finnish and Tartar branches. These are the three primitive elements of mankind. There is no more reason to admit Blumenbach's twenty-eight varieties than Prichard's seven; for both these schemes include notorious hybrids. It is probable that none of the three original types was ever found in absolute simplicity. The great cosmic agents had not merely brought into being the three clear-cut varieties; they had also, in the course of their action, caused many sub-species to appear. These were distinguished by some peculiar features, quite apart from the general character which they had in common with the whole branch. Racial crossing was not necessary to create these specific

modifications; they existed before any interbreeding took place at all. It would be fruitless to try to identify them today in the hybrid agglomeration that constitutes what we call the white race. It would be equally impossible with regard to the yellow race. Perhaps the black type has to some extent kept itself pure; at any rate it has remained nearer its original form, and thus shows at first sight what, in the case of the other great human divisions, is not given by the testimony of our senses, but may be admitted on the strength of historical proof.

The Negroes have always perpetuated the original forms of their race, such as the prognathous type with woolly hair, the Hindu type of the Kamaun and the Deccan, and the Pelagian of Polynesia. New varieties have certainly been created from their intermixture; this is the origin of what we may call the 'tertiary types', which are seen in the white and yellow races, as well as the black.

Much has been made of a noteworthy fact, which is used today as a sure criterion for determining the racial purity of a nation. This fact is the resemblance of face, shape and general constitution, including gesture and carriage. The further these resemblances go, the less mixture of blood is there supposed to be in the whole people. On the other hand, the more crossing there has been, the greater differences we shall find in the features, stature, walk and general appearance of the individuals ...

We must mention another law before going further. Crossing of blood does not merely imply the fusion of the two varieties, but also creates new characteristics, which henceforth furnish the most important standpoint from which to consider any particular sub-species. I need hardly say that these new and original qualities cannot be completely developed unless there has previously been a perfect fusion of the parent types; otherwise the tertiary

race cannot be considered as really established. The larger the two nations are, the greater will naturally be the time required for their fusion. But until the process is complete, and a state of physiological identity brought about, no new sub-species will be possible, as there is no question of normal development from an original, though composite source, but merely of the confusion and disorder that are always engendered from the imperfect mixture of elements which are naturally foreign to each other.

Our actual knowledge of the life of these tertiary races is very slight. Only in the misty beginnings of human history can we catch a glimpse, in certain places, of the white race when it was still in this stage – a stage which seems to have been everywhere short-lived. The civilizing instincts of these chosen peoples were continually forcing them to mix their blood with that of others. As for the black and yellow types, they are mere savages in the tertiary stage, and have no history at all.

To the tertiary races succeed others, which I will call quaternary. The Polynesians, sprung from the mixture of black and yellow, the mulattos, a blend of white and black – these are among the peoples belonging to the quaternary type. I need hardly say, once more, that the new type brings the characteristics peculiar to itself more or less into harmony with those which recall its two-fold descent.

When a quaternary race is again modified by the intervention of a new type, the resulting mixture has great difficulty in becoming stable; its elements are brought very slowly into harmony, and are combined in very irregular proportions. The original qualities of which it is composed are already weakened to a considerable extent, and become more and more neutralized. They tend to disappear in the confusion that has grown to be the main feature of the new product. The more this product

reproduces itself and crosses its blood, the more the confusion increases. It reaches infinity, when the people is too numerous for any equilibrium to have a chance of being established – at any rate, not before long ages have passed. Such a people is merely an awful example of racial anarchy. In the individuals we find, here and there, a dominant feature reminding us in no uncertain way that blood from every source runs in their veins. One man will have the Negro's hair, another the eyes of a Teuton, a third will have a Mongolian face, a fourth a Semitic figure; and yet all these will be akin! This is the state in which the great civilized nations are today; we may especially see proofs of it in their seaports, capitals and colonies, where a fusion of blood is more easily brought about. In Paris, London, Cadiz and Constantinople, we find traits recalling every branch of mankind, and that without going outside the circle of the walls, or considering any but the so-called native population. The lower classes will give us examples of all kinds, from the prognathous head of the Negro to the triangular face and slanting eyes of the Chinaman; for, especially since the Roman Empire, the most remote and divergent races have contributed to the blood of the inhabitants of our great cities. Commerce, peace and war, the founding of colonies, the succession of invasions, have all helped in their turn to increase the disorder; and if one could trace, some way back, the genealogical tree of the first man he met, he would probably be surprised at the strange company of ancestors among whom he would find himself.

We have shown that races differ physically from each other: we must now ask if they are also unequal in beauty and muscular strength. The answer cannot be long doubtful.

I have already observed that the human groups to which

the European nations and their descendants belong are the most beautiful. One has only to compare the various types of men scattered over the earth's surface to be convinced of this. From the almost rudimentary face and structure of the Pelagian and the Pecheray to the tall and nobly proportioned figure of Charlemagne, the intelligent regularity of the features of Napoleon, and the imposing majesty that exhales from the royal countenance of Louis XIV, there is a series of gradations; the peoples who are not of white blood approach beauty, but do not attain it.

Those who are most akin to us come nearest to beauty; such are the degenerate Aryan stocks of India and Persia, and those Semitic peoples who are least infected by contact with the black race. As these races recede from the white type, their features and limbs become incorrect in form; they acquire defects of proportion which, in the races that are completely foreign to us, end by producing an extreme ugliness. This is the ancient heritage and indelible mark of the greater number of human groups. We can no longer subscribe to the doctrine (reproduced by Helvétius in his book on the human intellect) which regards the idea of the beautiful as purely artificial and variable. All who still have scruples on that point should consult the admirable *Essay on the Beautiful* of the Piedmontese philosopher, Gioberti; and their doubts will be laid to rest. Nowhere is it better brought out that beauty is an absolute and necessary idea, admitting of no arbitrary application. I take my stand on the solid principles established by Gioberti, and have no hesitation in regarding the white race as superior to all others in beauty; these, again, differ among themselves in the degree in which they approach or recede from their model. Thus the human groups are unequal in beauty; and this inequality is rational, logical, permanent and indestructible.

Is there also an inequality in physical strength? The American savages, like the Hindus, are certainly our inferiors in this respect, as are also the Australians. The Negroes, too, have less muscular power; and all these peoples are infinitely less able to bear fatigue. We must distinguish, however, between purely muscular strength, which merely needs to spend itself for a single instant of victory, and the power of keeping up a prolonged resistance. The latter is far more typical than the former, of which we may find examples even in notoriously feeble races. If we take the blow of the fist as the sole criterion of strength, we shall find, among very backward Negro races, among the New Zealanders (who are usually of weak constitution), among Lascars and Malays, certain individuals who can deliver such a blow as well as any Englishman. But if we take the peoples as a whole, and judge them by amount of labour that they can go through without flinching, we shall give the palm to those belonging to the white race.

The different groups within the white race itself are as unequal in strength as they are in beauty, though the difference is less marked. The Italians are more beautiful than the Germans or the Swiss, the French or the Spanish. Similarly, the English show a higher type of physical beauty than the Slav nations.

In strength of fist, the English are superior to all the other European races; while the French and Spanish have a greater power of resisting fatigue and privation, as well as the inclemency of extreme climates. The question is settled, so far as the French are concerned, by the terrible campaign in Russia. Nearly all the Germans and the northern troops, accustomed though they were to very low temperatures, sank down in the snow; while the French regiments, though they paid their awful tribute to

the rigours of the retreat, were yet able to save most of their number. This superiority has been attributed to their better moral education and military spirit. But such an explanation is insufficient. The German officers, who perished by the hundreds, had just as high a sense of honour and duty as our soldiers had; but this did not prevent them from going under. We may conclude that the French have certain physical qualities that are superior to those of the Germans, which allow them to brave with impunity the snows of Russia as well as the burning sands of Egypt.

In order to appreciate the intellectual differences between races, we ought first to ascertain the degree of stupidity to which mankind can descend. We know already the highest point that it can reach, namely civilization.

Most scientific observers up to now have been very prone to make out the lowest types as worse than they really are.

Nearly all the early accounts of a savage tribe paint it in hideous colours, far more hideous than the reality. They give it so little power of reason and understanding, that it seems to be on a level with the monkey and below the elephant. It is true that we find the contrary opinion. If a captain is well received in an island, if he meets, as he believes, with a kind and hospitable welcome, and succeeds in making a few natives do a small amount of work with his sailors, then praises are showered on the happy people. They are declared to be fit for anything and capable of everything; and sometimes the enthusiasm bursts all bounds, and swears it has found among them some higher intelligences.

Even in the most hideous cannibal there is a spark of the divine fire, and to some extent the flame of understanding

can always be kindled in him. There are no tribes so low that they do not pass some judgments, true or false, just or unjust, on the things around them; the mere existence of such judgments is enough to show that in every branch of mankind some ray of intelligence is kept alive. It is this that makes the most degraded savages accessible to the teachings of religion and distinguishes them in a special manner, of which they are themselves conscious, from even the most intelligent beasts.

Are however these moral possibilities, which lie at the back of every man's consciousness, capable of infinite extension? Do all men possess in an equal degree an unlimited power of intellectual development? In other words, has every human race the capacity for becoming equal to every other? The question is ultimately concerned with the infinite capacity for improvement possessed by the species as a whole, and with the equality of races. I deny both points.

The idea of an infinite progress is very seductive to many modern philosophers, and they support it by declaring that our civilization has many merits and advantages which our differently trained ancestors did not possess. They bring forward all the phenomena that distinguished our modern societies. I have spoken of these already; but I am glad to be able to go through them again.

We are told that our scientific opinions are truer than they were; that our manners are, as a rule, kindly, and our morals better than those of the Greeks and Romans. Especially with regard to political liberty, they say, have we ideas and feelings, beliefs and tolerances, that prove our superiority. There are even some hopeful theorists who maintain that our institutions should lead us straight to that garden of the Hesperides which was sought so long, and with such ill-success, since the time when

the ancient navigators reported that it was not in the Canaries ...

A little more serious consideration of history will show what truth there is in these high claims.

We are certainly more learned than the ancients. This is because we have profited by their discoveries. If we have amassed more knowledge than they, it is merely because we are their heirs and pupils, and have continued their work. Does it follow that the discovery of steam power and the solution of a few mechanical problems have brought us on the way to omniscience? At most, our success may lead us to explore all the secrets of the material world. Before we achieve this conquest, there are many things to do which have not even been begun, indeed whose very existence is not yet suspected; but even when the victory is ours, shall we have advanced a single step beyond the bare affirmation of physical laws? We shall, I agree, have greatly increased our power of influencing nature and harnessing her to our service. We shall have found different ways of going round the world, or recognized definitely that certain routes are impossible. We shall have learnt how to move freely about in the air, and, by mounting a few miles nearer the limits of the earth's atmosphere, discovered or cleared up certain astronomical or other problems; but nothing more. All this does not lead us to infinity. Even if we had counted all the planetary systems that move through space, should we be any nearer? Have we learnt a single thing about the great mysteries that was unknown to the ancients? We have, merely, so far as I can see, changed the previous methods of circling the cave where the secret lies. We have not pierced its darkness one inch further.

Again, admitting that we are in certain directions more enlightened, yet we must have lost all trace of many things

that were familiar to our remote ancestors. Can we doubt that at the time of Abraham far more was known about primeval history than we know today? How many of our discoveries, made by chance or with great labour, are merely re-discoveries of forgotten knowledge! Further, how inferior we are in many respects to those who have lived before us! As I said above, in a different connection, can one compare even our most splendid works to the marvels still to be seen in Egypt, India, Greece and America? And these bear witness to the vanished magnificence of many other buildings, which have been destroyed far less by the heavy hand of time than by the senseless ravages of man. What are our arts, compared with those of Athens? What are our thinkers, compared with those of Alexandria and India? What are our poets, by the side of Valmiki, Kalidasa, Homer and Pindar?

Our work is, in fact, different from theirs. We have turned our minds to other inquiries and other ends than those pursued by the earlier civilized groups of mankind. But while tilling our new field, we have not been able to keep fertile the lands already cultivated. We have advanced on one flank, but have given ground on the other. It is a poor compensation; and far from proving our progress, it merely means that we have changed our position. For a real advance to have been made, we should at least have preserved in their integrity the chief intellectual treasures of the earlier societies, and set up, in addition, certain great and firmly based conclusions at which the ancients had aimed as well as ourselves. Our arts and sciences, using theirs as the starting point, should have discovered some new and profound truths about life and death, the genesis of living creatures, and the basic principles of the universe. On all these questions, modern science, as we imagine, has lost the visionary gleam that played round the dawn of

antiquity, and its own efforts have merely brought it to the humiliating confession, 'I seek and do not find.' There has been no real progress in the intellectual conquests of man. Our power of criticism is certainly better than that of our forefathers. This is a considerable gain, but it stands alone; and, after all, criticism merely means *classification*, not *discovery*.

As for our so-called new ideas on politics, we may allow ourselves to be more disrespectful to them than to our sciences.

The same fertility in theorizing, on which we so pride ourselves, was to be found at Athens after the death of Pericles. Anyone may be convinced of this by reading again the comedies of Aristophanes, and allowing for satirical exaggeration; they were recommended by Plato himself as a guide to the public life of the city of Athene. We have always despised such comparisons, since we persuaded ourselves that a fundamental difference between our present social order and the ancient Greek state was created by slavery. It made for a more far-reaching demagogy, I admit; but that is all. People spoke of slaves in the same way as one speaks today of workmen and the lower classes; and, further, how very advanced the Athenians must have been, when they tried to please their servile population after the battle of Arginusae!

Let us now turn to Rome. If you open the letters of Cicero, you will find the Roman orator a moderate Tory of today. His republic is exactly like our constitutional societies, in all that relates to the language of parties and parliamentary squabbles. There too, in the lower depths, seethed a population of degraded slaves, with revolt ever in their hearts, and sometimes in their fists also. We will leave this mob on one side; and we can do it the more readily as the law did not recognize their civil existence.

They did not count in politics, and their influence was limited to times of uproar. Even then, they merely carried out the commands of the revolutionaries of free birth.

Regarding, then, the slaves as of no account, does not the Forum offer us all the constituents of a modern social state? The populace, demanding bread and games, free doles and the right to enjoy them; the middle class, which succeeded in its aim of monopolizing the public services; the patriciate, always being transformed and giving ground, always losing its rights, until even its defenders agreed, as their one means of defence, to refuse all privilege and merely claim liberty for all; – have we not here an exact correspondence with our own time?

Does anyone believe that of the opinions we hear expressed today, however various they may be, there is a single one, or any shade of one, that was not known at Rome? I spoke above of the letters written from the Tusculan Villa: they contain the thoughts of a conservative with progressive leanings. As against Sulla, Pompeius and Cicero were liberals. They were not liberal enough for Caesar, and were too much so for Cato. Later, under the principate, we find a moderate royalist in Pliny the Younger, though one who loved tranquillity. He was against excessive liberty for the people, and excessive power for the emperor. His views were positivist; he thought little of the vanished splendours of the age of the Fabii, and preferred the prosaic administration of a Trajan. Not everyone agreed with him. Many feared another insurrection like that of Spartacus, and thought that the emperor could not make too despotic a use of his power. On the other hand some of the provincials asked for, and obtained, what we should call constitutional guarantees; while socialist opinions found so highly placed a representative as the Gallic Emperor Gaius Junius Postumus, who set down,

among his subjects for declamation, *Dives et pauper inimici*, 'The rich and the poor are natural enemies.'

In fact, every man who had any claim to share in the enlightenment of the time strongly asserted the equality of the human race, the right of all men to have their part in the good things of this world, the obvious necessity of the Graeco-Roman civilization, its perfection and refinement, its certainty of a future progress even beyond its present state, and, to crown all, its existence for ever. These ideas were not merely the pride and consolation of the pagans; they inspired also the firm hopes of the first and most illustrious Fathers of the Church, of whose views Tertullian was the self-constituted interpreter.

Finally – to complete the picture with a last striking trait – the most numerous party of all was formed by the indifferent, the people who were too weak or timid, too sceptical or contemptuous, to find truth in the midst of all the divergent theories that passed kaleidoscopically before their eyes; who loved order when it existed, and (so far as they could) endured disorder when it came; who were always wondering at the progress of material comforts unknown to their fathers, and who, without wishing to think too much of the other side, consoled themselves by repeating over and over again, 'Wonderful are the works of today!'

There would be more reason to believe that we have made improvements in political science, if we had invented some machinery that was unknown, in its essentials, before our time. Such a glory is not ours. Limited monarchies, for example, have been familiar to every age, and curious instances can be seen among certain American tribes, which in other respects have remained savage. Democratic and aristocratic republics of all kinds, balanced in the most various ways, have existed in the New as well as the Old

World. Tlaxcala is just as good an example as Athens, Sparta and Mecca before Mohammed's time. Even if it were shown that we had ourselves made some secondary improvements in the art of government, would this be enough to justify such a sweeping assertion as that the human race is capable of unlimited progress? Let us be as modest as that wisest of kings, when he said, 'There is nothing new under the sun.'

We come now to the question of manners. Ours are said to be gentler than those of the other great human societies; but this is very doubtful.

There are some rhetoricians today who would like to abolish war between nations. They have taken this theory from Seneca. Certain wise men of the East had also, on this subject, views that are precisely similar to those of the Moravian brotherhood. But even if the friends of universal peace succeeded in making Europe disgusted with the idea of war, they would still have to bring about a permanent change in the passions of mankind. Neither Seneca nor the Brahmins obtained such a victory. It is doubtful whether we are to succeed where they failed; especially as we may still see in our fields and our streets the bloody traces left by our so-called 'humanity'.

I agree that our principles are pure and elevated. Does our practice correspond to them?

Before we congratulate ourselves on our achievements, let us wait till our modern countries can boast of two centuries of peace, as could Roman Italy, the example of which has unfortunately not been followed by later ages; for since the beginning of modern civilization fifty years have never passed without massacres.

The capacity for infinite progress is, thus, not shown by the present state of our civilization. Man has been able to learn some things, but has forgotten many others. He has

not added one sense to his senses, one limb to his limbs, one faculty to his soul. He has merely explored another region of the circle in which he is confined, and even the comparison of his destiny with that of many kinds of birds and insects does not always inspire very consoling thoughts as to his happiness in this life.

The bees, the ants and the termites have found for themselves, from the day of their creation, the kind of life that suited them. The last two, in their communities, have invented a way of building their houses, laying in their provisions, and looking after their eggs, which in the opinion of naturalists could be neither altered nor improved. Such as it is, it has always been sufficient for the small wants of the creatures who use it. Similarly the bees – with their monarchical government, which admits of the deposition of the sovereign but not of a social revolution – have never for a single day turned aside from the manner of life that is most suitable to their needs. Metaphysicians were allowed for a long time to call animals machines, and to assign the cause of their movements to God, who was the 'soul of the brutes', *anima brutorum*. Now that the habits of these so-called automata are studied in a more careful way, we have not merely given up this contemptuous theory; we have even recognized that instinct has a capacity that raises it almost to the dignity of reason.

In the bee kingdom, we see the queens a prey to the anger of their subjects; this implies either a spirit of mutiny in the latter, or the inability of the former to fulfil their lawful obligations. We see too the termites sparing their conquered enemies, and then making them prisoners, and employing them in the public service by giving them the care of the young. What are we to conclude from such facts as these?

Our modern states are certainly more complicated, and

satisfy our needs in larger measure: but when I see the savage wandering on his way, fierce, sullen, idle and dirty, lazily dragging his feet along his uncultivated ground, carrying the pointed stick that is his only weapon, and followed by the wife whom he has bound to him by a marriage ceremony consisting solely in an empty and ferocious violence; when I see the wife carrying her child, whom she will kill with her own hands if he falls ill, or even if he worries her; when I see this miserable group under the pressure of hunger, suddenly stop, in its search for food, before a hill peopled by intelligent ants, gape at it in wonder, put their feet through it, seize the eggs and devour them, and then withdraw sadly into the hollow of a rock – when I see all this, I ask myself whether the insects that have just perished are not more highly gifted than the stupid family of the destroyer, and whether the instinct of the animals, restricted as it is to a small circle of wants, does not really make them happier than the faculty of reason which has left our poor humanity naked on the earth, and a thousand times more exposed than any other species to the sufferings caused by the united agency of air, sun, rain and snow. Man, in his wretchedness, has never succeeded in inventing a way of providing the whole race with clothes or in putting them beyond the reach of hunger and thirst. It is true that the knowledge possessed by the lowest savage is more extensive than that of any animal; but the animals know what is useful to them, and we do not. They hold fast to what knowledge they have, but we often cannot keep what we have ourselves discovered. They are always, in normal seasons, sure of satisfying their needs by their instincts. But there are numerous tribes of men that from the beginning of their history have never been able to rise above a stinted and precarious existence. So far as material well-being

goes, we are no better than the animals; our horizon is wider than theirs, but, like theirs, it is still cramped and bounded.

I have hardly insisted enough on this unfortunate tendency of mankind to lose on one side what it gains on the other. Yet this is the great fact that condemns us to wander through our intellectual domains without ever succeeding, in spite of their narrow limits, in holding them all at the same time. If this fatal law did not exist, it might well happen that at some date in the dim future, when man had gathered together all the wisdom of all the ages, knowing what he had power to know and possessing all that was within his reach, he might at last have learnt how to apply his wealth, and live in the midst of nature, at peace with his kind and no longer at grips with misery; and having gained tranquillity after all his struggles, he might find his ultimate rest, if not in a state of absolute perfection, at any rate in the midst of joy and abundance.

Such happiness, with all its limitations, is not even possible for us, since man unlearns as fast as he learns; he cannot gain intellectually and morally without losing physically, and he does not hold any of his conquests strongly enough to be certain of keeping them always ...

All the civilizations before our own have thought, as we do, that they were set firmly on the rock of time by their unforgettable discoveries. They all believed in their immortality. The Incas and their families, who travelled swiftly in their palanquins on the excellent roads, fifteen hundred miles long, that still link Cuzco to Quito, were certainly convinced that their conquests would last for ever. Time, with one blow of his wing, has hurled their empire, like so many others, into the uttermost abyss. These kings of Peru also had their sciences, their machinery, their powerful engines, at the work of which we still stand

amazed without being able to guess their construction. They too knew the secret of carrying enormous masses from place to place. They built fortresses by piling, one upon the other, blocks of stone thirty-eight feet long and eighteen wide, such as may be seen in the ruins of Tihuanaco, to which these gigantic building materials must have been brought from a distance of many miles. Do we know the means used by the engineers of this vanished people to solve such a problem? No more than we know how the vast Cyclopean walls were constructed, the ruins of which, in many parts of southern Europe, still defy the ravages of time.

We must not confuse the causes of a civilization with its results. The causes disappear, and the results are forgotten, when the spirit that gave them birth has departed. If they persist, it is because of a new spirit that takes hold of them, and often succeeds in giving quite a new direction to their activities. The human mind is always in motion. It runs from one point to another, but cannot be in all places at once. It exalts what it embraces, and forgets what it has abandoned. Held prisoner for ever within a circle whose bounds it may not overstep, it never manages to cultivate one part of its domain without leaving the others fallow. It is always at the same time superior and inferior to its forebears. Mankind never goes beyond itself, and so is not capable of infinite progress.

If the human races were equal, the course of history would form an affecting, glorious and magnificent picture. The races would all have been equally intelligent, with a keen eye for their true interests and the same aptitude for conquest and domination. Early in the world's history, they would have gladdened the face of the earth with a crowd of civilizations, all flourishing at the same time, and all exactly alike. At the moment when the most ancient

Sanskrit peoples were founding their empire, and, by means of religion and the sword, were covering northern India with harvests, towns, palaces and temples; at the moment when the first Assyrian Empire was crowning the plains of the Tigris and Euphrates with its splendid buildings, and the chariots and horsemen of Nimrod were defying the four winds, we should have seen, on the African coast, among the tribes of the prognathous Negroes, the rise of an enlightened and cultured social state, skilful in adapting means to ends, and in possession of great wealth and power.

The Celts, in the course of their migrations, would have carried with them to the extreme west of Europe the necessary elements of a great society, as well as some tincture of the ancient wisdom of the East; they would certainly have found, among the Iberian peoples spread over the face of Italy, in Gaul and Spain and the islands of the Mediterranean, rivals as well schooled as themselves in the early traditions, as expert as they in the arts and inventions required for civilization.

Mankind, at one with itself, would have nobly walked the earth, rich in understanding, and founding everywhere societies resembling each other. All nations would have judged their needs in the same way, asked nature for the same things, and viewed her from the same angle. A short time would have been sufficient for them to get into close contact with each other and to form the complex network of relations that is everywhere so necessary and profitable for progress.

The tribes that were unlucky enough to live on a barren soil, at the bottom of rocky gorges, on the shores of ice-bound seas, or on steppes for ever swept by the north winds – these might have had to battle against the unkindness of nature for a longer time than the more favoured

peoples. But in the end, having no less wisdom and understanding than the others, they would not have been backward in discovering that the rigours of a climate has its remedies. They would have shown the intelligent activity we see today among the Danes, the Norwegians and the Icelanders. They would have tamed the rebellious soil, and forced it, in spite of itself, to be productive. In mountainous regions, we should have found them leading a pastoral life, like the Swiss, or developing industries like those of Kashmir. If their climate had been so bad, and its situation so unfavourable, that there was obviously nothing to be done with it, then the thought would have struck them that the world was large, and contained many valleys and kindly plains; they would have left their ungrateful country, and soon have found a land where they could turn their energy and intelligence to good account.

Then the nations of the earth, equally enlightened and equally rich, some by the commerce of their seething maritime cities, some by the agriculture of their vast and flourishing prairies, others by the industries of a mountainous district, others again by the facilities for transport afforded them by their central position – all these, in spite of the temporary quarrels, civil wars and seditions inseparable from our condition as men, might soon have devised some system of balancing their conflicting interests. Civilizations identical in origin would, by a long process of give and take, have ended by being almost exactly alike; one might then have seen established that federation of the world which has been the dream of so many centuries, and which would inevitably be realized if all races were actually gifted, in the same degree, with the same powers.

But we know that such a picture is purely fantastic. The first peoples worthy of the name came together under the inspiration of an idea of union which the barbarians who

lived more or less near them not only failed to conceive so quickly, but never conceived at all. The early peoples emigrated from their first home and came across other peoples, whom they conquered; but these again neither understood nor ever adopted with any intelligence the main ideas in the civilization which had been imposed on them. Far from showing that all the tribes of mankind are intellectually alike, the nations capable of civilization have always proved the contrary, first by the absolutely different foundations on which they based their states, and secondly by the marked antipathy which they showed to each other. The force of example has never awakened any instinct, in any people, which did not spring from their own nature. Spain and the Gauls saw the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Carthaginians set up flourishing towns, one after the other, on their coasts. But both Spain and the Gauls refused to copy the manners and the government of these great trading powers. When the Romans came as conquerors, they only succeeded in introducing a different spirit by filling their new dominions with Roman colonies. Thus the case of the Celts and the Iberians shows that civilization cannot be acquired without the crossing of blood.

Consider the position of the American Indians at the present day. They live side by side with a people which always wishes to increase in numbers, to strengthen its power. They see thousands of ships passing up and down their waterways. They know that the strength of their masters is irresistible. They have no hope whatever of seeing their native land one day delivered from the conqueror; their whole continent is henceforth, as they all know, the inheritance of the European. A glance is enough to convince them of the tenacity of those foreign institutions under which human life ceases to depend, for its

continuance, on the abundance of game or fish. From their purchases of brandy, guns, and blankets, they know that even their own coarse tastes would be more easily satisfied in the midst of such a society, which is always inviting them to come in, and which seeks, by bribes and flattery, to obtain their consent. It is always refused. They prefer to flee from one lonely spot to another; they bury themselves more and more in the heart of the country, abandoning all, even the bones of their fathers. They will die out, as they know well; but they are kept, by a mysterious feeling of horror, under the yoke of their unconquerable repulsion from the white race, and although they admire its strength and general superiority, their conscience and their whole nature, in a word, their blood, revolts from the mere thought of having anything in common with it.

In Spanish America less aversion is felt by the natives towards their masters. The reason is that they were formerly left by the central government under the rule of their caciques. The government did not try to civilize them; it allowed them to keep their own laws and customs, and, provided they became Christians, merely required them to pay tribute. There was no question of colonization. Once the conquest was made, the Spaniards showed a lazy tolerance to the conquered, and only oppressed them spasmodically. This is why the Indians of South America are less unhappy than those of the north, and continue to live on, whereas the neighbours of the Anglo-Saxons will be pitilessly driven down into the abyss.

Civilization is incommunicable, not only to savages, but also to more enlightened nations. This is shown by the efforts of French goodwill and conciliation in the ancient kingdom of Algiers at the present day, as well as by the experience of the English in India, and the Dutch in Java.

There are no more striking and conclusive proofs of the unlikeness and inequality of races.

We should be wrong to conclude that the barbarism of certain tribes is so innate that no kind of culture is possible for them. Traces may be seen, among many savage peoples, of a state of things better than that obtaining now. Some tribes, otherwise sunk in brutishness, hold to traditional rules, of a curious complexity, in the matter of marriage, inheritance and government. Their rites are unmeaning today, but they evidently go back to a higher order of ideas. The Red Indians are brought forward as an example; the vast deserts over which they roam are supposed to have been once the settlements of the Alleghanians. Others, such as the natives of the Marianas, have methods of manufacture which they cannot have invented themselves. They hand them down, without thought, from father to son, and employ them quite mechanically.

When we see a people in a state of barbarism, we must look more closely before concluding that this has always been their condition. We must take many other facts into account, if we would avoid error.

Some peoples are caught in the sweep of a kindred race; they submit to it more or less, taking over certain customs, and following them out as far as possible. On the disappearance of the dominant race, either by expulsion, or by a complete absorption in the conquered people, the latter allows the culture, especially its root principles, to die out almost entirely, and retains only the small part it has been able to understand. Even this cannot happen except among nations related by blood. This was the attitude of the Assyrians towards the Chaldean culture, of the Syrian and Egyptian Greeks towards the Greeks of Europe, of the Iberians, Celts and Illyrians in face of the Roman ideas. If the Cherokees, the Catawhas, the

Muskhogees, the Seminoles, the Natchez and the like still show some traces of the Alleghanian intelligence, I cannot indeed infer that they are of pure blood, and directly descended from the originating stock – this would mean that a race that was once civilized can lose its civilization – I merely say that if any of them derives from the ancient conquering type as its source, the stream is a muddy one, and has been mingled with many tributaries on the way. If it were otherwise, the Cherokees would never have fallen into barbarism. As for the other and less gifted tribes, they seem to represent merely the dregs of the indigenous population, which was forced by the foreign conquerors to combine together to form the basic elements of a new social state. It is not surprising that these remnants of civilization should have preserved, without understanding them, laws, rites and customs invented by men cleverer than themselves; they never knew their meaning or theoretical principles, or regarded them as anything but objects of superstitious veneration. The same argument applies to the traces of mechanical skill found among them. The methods so admired by travellers may well have been ultimately derived from a finer race that has long disappeared. Sometimes we must look even further for their origin. Thus, the working of mines was known to the Iberians, Aquitanians and the Bretons of the Scilly Isles; but the secret was first discovered in Upper Asia, and thence brought long ago by the ancestors of the Western peoples in the course of their migration.

The natives of the Caroline Islands are almost the most interesting in Polynesia. Their looms, their carved canoes, their taste for trade and navigation put a deep barrier between them and the other Negroes. It is not hard to see how they come to have these powers. They owe them to the Malay blood in their veins; and as, at the same time,

their blood is far from being pure, their racial gifts have survived only in a stunted and degraded form.

We must not therefore infer, from the traces of civilization existing among a barbarous people, that it has ever been really civilized. It has lived under the dominion of another tribe, of kindred blood but superior to it; or perhaps, by merely living close to the other tribe, it has, feebly and humbly, imitated its customs. The savage races of today have always been savage, and we are right in concluding, by analogy, that they will continue to be so, until the day when they disappear.

Their disappearance is inevitable as soon as two entirely unconnected races come into active contact; and the best proof is the fate of the Polynesians and the American Indians.

The preceding argument has established the following facts:

(i) The tribes which are savage at the present day have always been so, and always will be, however high the civilizations with which they are brought into contact.

(ii) For a savage people even to go on living in the midst of civilization, the nation which created the civilization must be a nobler branch of the same race.

(iii) This is also necessary if two distinct civilizations are to affect each other to any extent, by an exchange of qualities, and give birth to other civilizations compounded from their elements. That they should ever be fused together is of course out of the question.

(iv) The civilizations that proceed from two completely foreign races can only touch on the surface. They never coalesce, and the one will always exclude the other ...

The irreconcilable antagonism between different races and cultures is clearly established by history, and such innate repulsion must imply unlikeness and inequality. If

it is admitted that the European cannot hope to civilize the Negro, and manages to transmit to the mulatto only a very few of his own characteristics; if the children of a mulatto and a white woman cannot really understand anything better than a hybrid culture, a little nearer than their father's to the ideas of the white race – in that case, I am right in saying that the different races are unequal in intelligence.

I will not adopt the ridiculous method that is unhappily only too dear to our ethnologists. I will not discuss, as they do, the moral and intellectual worth of individuals taken one by one.

I need not indeed speak of morality at all, as I have already admitted the power of every human family to receive the light of Christianity in its own way. As to the question of intellectual merit, I absolutely refuse to make use of the argument, 'Every Negro is a fool.' My main reason for avoiding it is that I should have to recognize, for the sake of balance, that every European is intelligent; and heaven keep me from such a paradox!

12. THE THREE BASIC RACES

I HAVE shown the unique place in the organic world occupied by the human species, the profound physical, as well as moral, differences separating it from all other kinds of living creatures. Considering it by itself, I have been able to distinguish, on physiological grounds alone, three great and clearly marked types, the black, the yellow and the white. However uncertain the aims of physiology may be, however meagre its resources, however defective its methods, it can proceed thus far with absolute certainty.

The negroid variety is the lowest, and stands at the foot

of the ladder. The animal character, that appears in the shape of the pelvis, is stamped on the Negro from birth, and foreshadows his destiny. His intellect will always move within a very narrow circle. He is not however a mere brute, for behind his low receding brow, in the middle of his skull, we can see signs of a powerful energy, however crude its objects. If his mental faculties are dull or even non-existent, he often has an intensity of desire, and so of will, which may be called terrible. Many of his senses, especially taste and smell, are developed to an extent unknown to the other two races.

The very strength of his sensations is the most striking proof of his inferiority. All food is good in his eyes, nothing disgusts or repels him. What he desires is to eat, to eat furiously, and to excess; no carrion is too revolting to be swallowed by him. It is the same with odours; his inordinate desires are satisfied with all, however coarse or even horrible. To these qualities may be added an instability and capriciousness of feeling, that cannot be tied down to any single object, and which, so far as he is concerned, do away with all distinctions of good and evil. We might even say that the violence with which he pursues the object that has aroused his senses and inflamed his desires is a guarantee of the desires being soon satisfied and the object forgotten. Finally, he is equally careless of his own life and that of others: he kills willingly, for the sake of killing; and this human machine, in whom it is so easy to arouse emotion, shows, in face of suffering, either a monstrous indifference or a cowardice that seeks a voluntary refuge in death.

The yellow race is the exact opposite of this type. The skull points forward, not backward. The forehead is wide and bony, often high and projecting. The shape of the face is triangular, the nose and chin showing none of the coarse

protuberances that mark the Negro. There is further a general proneness to obesity, which, though not confined to the yellow type, is found there more frequently than in the others. The yellow man has little physical energy, and is inclined to apathy; he commits none of the strange excesses so common among Negroes. His desires are feeble, his will-power rather obstinate than violent; his longing for material pleasures, though constant, is kept within bounds. A rare glutton by nature, he shows far more discrimination in his choice of food. He tends to mediocrity in everything; he understands easily enough anything not too deep or sublime. He has a love of utility and a respect for order, and knows the value of a certain amount of freedom. He is practical, in the narrowest sense of the word. He does not dream or theorize; he invents little, but can appreciate and take over what is useful to him. His whole desire is to live in the easiest and most comfortable way possible. The yellow races are thus clearly superior to the black. Every founder of a civilization would wish the backbone of his society, his middle class, to consist of such men. But no civilized society could be created by them; they could not supply its nerve force, or set in motion the springs of beauty and action.

We come now to the white peoples. These are gifted with reflective energy, or rather with an energetic intelligence. They have a feeling for utility, but in a sense far wider and higher, more courageous and ideal, than the yellow races; a perseverance that takes account of obstacles and ultimately finds a means of overcoming them; a greater physical power, an extraordinary instinct for order, not merely as a guarantee of peace and tranquillity, but as an indispensable means of self-preservation. At the same time, they have a remarkable, and even extreme, love of liberty, and are openly hostile to the

formalism under which the Chinese are glad to vegetate, as well as to the strict despotism which is the only way of governing the Negro.

The white races are, further, distinguished by an extraordinary attachment to life. They know better how to use it, and so, as it would seem, set a greater price on it; both in their own persons and those of others, they are more sparing of life. When they are cruel, they are conscious of their cruelty; it is very doubtful whether such a consciousness exists in the Negro. At the same time, they have discovered reasons why they should surrender this busy life of theirs, that is so precious to them. The principal motive is honour, which under various names has played an enormous part in the ideas of the race from the beginning. I need hardly add that the word honour, together with all the civilizing influences connoted by it, is unknown to both the yellow and the black man.

On the other hand, the immense superiority of the white peoples in the whole field of the intellect is balanced by an inferiority in the intensity of their sensations. In the world of the senses, the white man is far less gifted than the others, and so is less tempted and less absorbed by considerations of the body, although in physical structure he is far the most vigorous.

Such are the three constituent elements of the human race. I call them secondary types, as I think myself obliged to omit all discussion of the Adamite man. From the combination, by intermarriage, of the varieties of these types come the tertiary groups. The quaternary formations are produced by the union of one of these tertiary types, or of a pure-blooded tribe, with another group taken from one of the two foreign species.

Below these categories others have appeared – and still appear. Some of these are very strongly characterized, and

form new and distinct points of departure, coming as they do from races that have been completely fused. Others are incomplete, and ill-ordered, and, one might even say, anti-social, since their elements, being too numerous, too disparate, or too barbarous, have had neither the time nor the opportunity for combining to any fruitful purpose. No limits, except the horror excited by the possibility of infinite intermixture, can be assigned to the number of these hybrid and chequered races that make up the whole of mankind.

It would be unjust to assert that every mixture is bad and harmful. If the three great types had remained strictly separate, the supremacy would no doubt have always been in the hands of the finest of the white races, and the yellow and black varieties would have crawled for ever at the feet of the lowest of the whites. Such a state is so far ideal, since it has never been beheld in history; and we can imagine it only by recognizing the undisputed superiority of those groups of the white races which have remained the purest.

It would not have been all gain. The superiority of the white race would have been clearly shown, but it would have been bought at the price of certain advantages which have followed the mixture of blood. Although these are far from counter-balancing the defects they have brought in their train, yet they are sometimes to be commended. Artistic genius, which is equally foreign to each of the three great types, arose only after the intermarriage of white and black. Again, in the Malayan variety, a human family was produced from the yellow and black races that had more intelligence than either of its ancestors. Finally, from the union of white and yellow, certain intermediary peoples have sprung, who are superior to the purely Finnish tribes as well as to the Negroes.

I do not deny that these are good results. The world of art and great literature that comes from the mixture of blood, the improvement and ennoblement of inferior races – all these are wonders for which we must needs be thankful. The small have been raised. Unfortunately, the great have been lowered by the same process; and this is an evil that nothing can balance or repair. Since I am putting together the advantages of racial mixtures, I will also add that to them is due the refinement of manners and beliefs, and especially the tempering of passion and desire. But these are merely transitory benefits, and if I recognize that the mulatto, who may become a lawyer, a doctor or a business man, is worth more than his Negro grandfather, who was absolutely savage, and fit for nothing, I must also confess that the Brahmins of primitive India, the heroes of the Iliad and the Shahnameh, the warriors of Scandinavia – the glorious shades of noble races that have disappeared – give us a higher and more brilliant idea of humanity, and were more active, intelligent, and trusty instruments of civilization and grandeur than the peoples, hybrid a hundred times over, of the present day. And the blood even of these was no longer pure.

However it has come about, the human races, as we find them in history, are complex; and one of the chief consequences has been to throw into disorder most of the primitive characteristics of each type. The good as well as the bad qualities are seen to diminish in intensity with repeated intermixture of blood; but they also scatter and separate off from each other, and are often mutually opposed. The white race originally possessed the monopoly of beauty, intelligence and strength. By its union with other varieties, hybrids were created, which were beautiful without strength, strong without intelligence, or, if intelligent, both weak and ugly. Further, when the

quantity of white blood was increased to an indefinite amount by successive infusions, and not by a single admixture, it no longer carried with it its natural advantages, and often merely increased the confusion already existing in the racial elements. Its strength, in fact, seemed to be its only remaining quality, and even its strength served only to promote disorder. The apparent anomaly is easily explained. Each stage of a perfect mixture produces a new type from diverse elements, and develops special faculties. As soon as further elements are added, the vast difficulty of harmonizing the whole creates a state of anarchy. The more this increases, the more do even the best and richest of the new contributions diminish in value, and by their mere presence add fuel to an evil which they cannot abate. If mixtures of blood are, to a certain extent, beneficial to the mass of mankind, if they raise and ennoble it, this is merely at the expense of mankind itself, which is stunted, abased, enervated and humiliated in the persons of its noblest sons. Even if we admit that it is better to turn a myriad of degraded beings into mediocre men than to preserve the race of princes whose blood is adulterated and impoverished by being made to suffer this dishonourable change, yet there is still the unfortunate fact that the change does not stop here; for when the mediocre men are once created at the expense of the greater, they combine with other mediocrities, and from such unions, which grow ever more and more degraded, is born a confusion which, like that of Babel, ends in utter impotence, and leads societies down to the abyss of nothingness whence no power on earth can rescue them.

Such is the lesson of history. It shows us that all civilizations derive from the white race, that none can exist without its help, and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that

created it, provided that this group itself belongs to the most illustrious branch of our species.

Of the multitude of peoples which live or have lived on the earth, ten alone have risen to the position of complete societies. The remainder have gravitated round these more or less independently, like planets round their suns. If there is any element of life in these ten civilizations that is not due to the impulse of the white races, any seed of death that does not come from the inferior stocks that mingled with them, then the whole theory on which this book rests is false. On the other hand, if the facts are as I say, then we have an irrefragable proof of the nobility of our own species. Only the actual details can set the final seal of truth on my system, and they alone can show with sufficient exactness the full implications of my main thesis, that peoples degenerate only in consequence of the various admixtures of blood which they undergo; that their degeneration corresponds exactly to the quantity and quality of the new blood, and that the rudest possible shock to the vitality of a civilization is given when the ruling elements in a society and those developed by racial change have become so numerous that they are clearly moving away from the homogeneity necessary to their life, and it therefore becomes impossible for them to be brought into harmony and so acquire the common instincts and interests, the common logic of existence, which is the sole justification for any social bond whatever. There is no greater curse than such disorder, for however bad it may have made the present state of things, it promises still worse for the future.

To prove these points I shall now begin the historical part of my subject. I agree that this is a vast undertaking. But, since all its elements are so coherently and consistently linked and since they converge so exactly upon the same

conclusion, it seems to me that its very scope, far from being a hindrance, will assist greatly in its aim of establishing better and stronger foundations for the arguments I shall be gathering together. It will undoubtedly be necessary for me to survey a great part of the globe in connection with the white migrations. But always this will involve radiating outwards from the regions of higher Asia, the central point from which the civilizing race originally proceeded. Countries, which once they had fallen into its possession became inseparable from it, will have to be brought into the domain of history, each in turn. There I shall observe the unfolding of ethnic laws, their combinations and full consequences. I shall demonstrate with what monotonously inexorable regularity they impose their application. From this whole undoubtedly imposing prospect, from this view of a colourful landscape encompassing within its vast limits all the countries of the world where man has shown himself truly master, in short, from this collection of equally grand and stirring pictures I shall deduce both the inequality of the human races and the pre-eminence of one race above all others. My proofs will be as indestructible as diamonds and upon them the viperish teeth of demagogic ideas will be powerless to gnaw. So now I shall put aside the mode of critical reasoning and take up that of synthesis and assertion. It remains only to make clearly known the ground upon which I stand. This can be briefly done.

The great human civilizations are but ten in number and all of them have been produced upon the initiative of the white race. I should list them as follows:

1. The Indian civilization, which reached its highest point round the Indian Ocean, and in the north and east of the Indian continent, south-east of the Brahmaputra. It arose from a branch of a white people, the Aryans.

2. The Egyptians, round whom collected the Ethiopians, the Nubians, and a few smaller peoples to the west of the oasis of Ammon. This society was created by an Aryan colony from India, that settled in the upper valley of the Nile.

3. The Assyrians, with whom may be classed the Jews, the Phoenicians, the Lydians, the Carthaginians and the Hymiarites. They owed their civilizing qualities to the great white invasions which may be grouped under the name of the descendants of Shem and Ham. The Zoroastrian Iranians who ruled part of Central Asia under the names of Medes, Persians and Bactrians, were a branch of the Aryan family.

4. The Greeks, who came from the same Aryan stock, as modified by Semitic elements.

5. The Chinese civilization, arising from a cause similar to that operating in Egypt. An Aryan colony from India brought the light of civilization to China also. Instead however of becoming mixed with black peoples, as on the Nile, the colony became absorbed in Malay and yellow races, and was reinforced, from the north-west, by a fair number of white elements, equally Aryan but no longer Hindu.

6. The ancient civilizations of the Italian peninsula, the cradle of Roman culture. This was produced by a mixture of Celts, Iberians, Aryans and Semites.

7. The Germanic races, which in the fifth century transformed the Western mind. These were Aryans.

8, 9, 10. The three civilizations of America, the Alleghanian, the Mexican and the Peruvian.

Of the first seven civilizations, which are those of the Old World, six belong, at least in part, to the Aryan race, and the seventh, that of Assyria, owes to this race the Iranian renaissance, which is, historically, its best title to

fame. Almost the whole of the continent of Europe is inhabited at the present time by groups of which the basis is white, but in which the non-Aryan elements are the most numerous. There is no true civilization, among the European peoples, where the Aryan branch is not predominant.

In the above list no Negro race is seen as the initiator of a civilization. Only when it is mixed with some other can it even be initiated into one.

Similarly, no spontaneous civilization is to be found among the yellow races; and when the Aryan blood is exhausted stagnation supervenes.

It is the vigorous development of this theme that I shall now trace through universal history.

Thus closing Book One Gobineau pursues through the remaining five Books an attempt at giving detailed historical substantiation to the hypotheses already asserted. Yet, in reality, he often uses as already established proofs the very hypotheses for which the historical account is supposed to provide independent validation.

Book Two concerns itself not only with the ancient Hamites and Semites but also with the Assyrians and Egyptians. The next considers the Aryans in India and the history of Brahminism and Buddhism, as well as the development of the yellow race. In Book Four the story of the white peoples is further recounted and the achievements of the Greeks are recorded. Book Five examines the earliest inhabitants of Europe and culminates in an account of Roman civilization.

The final Book is concerned essentially with the history of Western civilization since the decline of the Roman Empire and the invasion of those partial regenerators the Aryan-Germans. It includes also Gobineau's observations on the past and future of the American continent. Our selections from the Essay *are here com-*

pleted by two sections, hitherto unavailable in English, which epitomize his dark despair and which drive home the very lesson that the whole of this vast work was written to illustrate. Here Gobineau beats out with shattering force the unrelenting pessimism of his conclusions as to the racial destruction of modern civilization.

13. THE MODERN WORLD

In the whole of human history there have been few situations similar to that of the British people from the tenth century to the present day. We have seen elsewhere Aryan or Aryanized peoples inject energy into nations of different composition, powerfully strengthening them while at the same time undertaking to reorientate the already well-developed cultures which they found; but these elite groups, concentrated in superior number into a small area and not subject to interference from races richer in experience but inferior in quality, have only been observed in very small numbers. It was to this exceptional circumstance that the English, with their slowly evolving society, owed the strength of their empire. It has certainly not been the most brilliant, humane or noble of European states, but it is still the most vigorous.

This cautious, but so profitable, progress quickened, however, from the end of the seventeenth century onwards. The religious wars in France had caused a new influx of French elements into the United Kingdom. This time they dared not re-enter the aristocratic classes; the ever-increasing commercial organization of society threw many of them headlong into the plebeian masses, and Anglo-Saxon blood was gravely contaminated. The birth of heavy industry increased this tendency by attracting into the country workers from all non-Germanic races – great

numbers of Irish, Italians and Germans who were of Slavonic stock or came from strongly Celtic races.

The English could then really feel that they belonged to the existing body of romanized nations. They ceased to occupy so imperturbably the half-way house which had previously kept them in as close association with the Scandinavian nations as with the Mediterranean ones, and which, during the Middle Ages, had made them sympathize above all with the Flemish and Dutch, with whom they had much in common. From this moment onwards they began to show greater sympathy for France. They became more literary in the artistic sense of the word. They were attracted, unlike other nations, towards classical studies; they became interested in sculpture, painting and music. Although people who had long been gifted with, and accustomed to, a more exacting kind of sophistication accused them of still showing a kind of crudity and barbarity, they succeeded in attaining, in these kinds of cultural pursuits, a glory which their ancestors had neither known nor desired.

The influx of immigrants from the continent continued and increased. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes sent many inhabitants of our southern provinces to rejoin the descendants of previous refugees in the cities of Britain. The French Revolution had no less considerable an influence and was no less generous in this direction. Besides the recent inflow into England of part of the Irish, other ethnic influences have remorselessly gained ground, and instincts opposed to the Germanic mentality have continued indefinitely to abound at the heart of a society which – formerly so compact, logical, strong and unliterary – could never previously have witnessed the birth of Byron without a feeling of horror.

The transformation of society is quite evident; it is

making steady progress and can be seen in a multiplicity of ways. The English legal system has lost its solidity. Reforms are imminent, and the Pandects are the reformers' ideal. The aristocracy is being challenged; democracy, hitherto unknown, is making claims which were not conceived on Anglo-Saxon soil. The innovations and ideas which find favour, and the reorganization of dissolving forces, all reveal an urge towards change which has been brought over from the continent. England is in the process of entering, in its turn, into the midst of *romanity*.

* * *

Let us return to the empire of Charlemagne, for it was there that modern civilization had of necessity to be born. The non-romanized Germans of Scandinavia, northern Germany and the British Isles had lost their essential innocence through social intercourse; their strength was now lacking in flexibility. They were too wanting in ideas to attain a considerable number or indeed any great variety of achievements. Slav countries had the added disadvantage of moderate talent and this lack of ability proved so vital that, when several of them found themselves in intimate contact with Eastern romanity and the Greek Empire, nothing could result from this union. Or rather, there resulted racial mixtures which will be even more pathetic than the Byzantine compromise.

It was thus in the heart of the provinces of the Western Empire that modern society took shape. The opposition in these provinces between barbarity and romanity was no longer very striking; these two prime elements in future world society had begun to interpenetrate, and, as if to complete this process of amalgamation more rapidly, had

become subdivided. Rudimentary social amalgams were everywhere swift to detach themselves from the main body of civilization; they were enclosed within uncertain boundaries and were of vague nationalities; the great monolith of Western society was everywhere breaking up; social intermixture was changing the nature of the different elements which were seething within it ...

According to the principles set forth in this book the new civilization had to develop, in its initial stages, from the fusion between barbarity and romanity, with the former possessing the strongly hellenistic elements which contained the essence of imperial civilization. In fact, three regions morally dominated all others from the ninth century to the thirteenth century: northern Italy, the central Rhineland and northern France.

In northern Italy Lombard blood retained its strength, which was periodically revived by the immigration of Franks. Provided that this condition were satisfied, this area possessed the necessary strength to fulfil its ultimate destiny. On the other hand, the indigenous population was very generously endowed with hellenistic elements, and as it was very numerous in comparison with the barbarian colonization intermixture soon gave it the dominant position. The Roman communal system had been maintained and was developing rapidly. The cities, led by Milan, Venice and Florence, were taking on an importance which cities elsewhere would not enjoy for a very long time. Their constitutions were developing something of the exigent absolutism of the ancient republics. Military authority was weakening; Germanic royalty was nothing but a transparent and fragile veil thrown over everything. From the twelfth century onwards feudal nobility was almost totally destroyed and then only just continued to exist on the level of local, romanized tyranny; the bour-

geoisie, in every area it controlled, was replacing it with a patriciate of the ancient kind; imperial power was being reborn and intellectual life rejuvenated; commerce was respected; and an unprecedented brilliance and splendour surrounded the Lombard League. But it must not be forgotten that Teutonic blood, instinctively detested and persecuted by all these people who were madly anticipating the return to romanity, was precisely what gave them their vigour and energy. It lost ground every day; but it still existed, as is proved by the persistent obstinacy with which individual rights were maintained, even among churchmen, in this land which so avidly sought to absorb its regenerators ...

When in the fifteenth century Germanic blood had almost finished being dissipated and absorbed by the people of northern Italy, the country entered into a period similar to that which southern Greece experienced after the Persian wars. Its political vitality was transformed into a magnificent flowering of artistic and literary culture. From this point of view it reached heights which Roman Italy, for ever bent under the weight of its Athenian models, had never known. It was generously endowed with the originality which its precursor had lacked. But this triumph was as transient as that of Plato's time: its glory scarcely lasted a hundred years and, when it had ended, the general agony began again. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries added nothing to the glory of Italy, and certainly greatly detracted from it.

On the banks of the Rhine and in the Belgian provinces, the Roman elements were numerically surpassed by the Germanic elements. Furthermore, they were naturally more greatly influenced by the utilitarian essence of the remaining Celtic elements than the indigenous inhabitants of Italy could be. The local civilization developed according

to the influences which shaped it. In the application of feudal privilege, the imperial system of benefices was shown to be ineffectual; the links by which it connected the fief-holder and the throne were always very slack, whereas the independent doctrines of the originally Germanic legislation were sufficiently preserved to allow the feudal nobility to retain for a long time a free individuality which no longer existed elsewhere. The nobility of Hainault and the Palatinate deserved, until the sixteenth century, to be regarded as the richest, proudest and most independent in Europe. The emperor, their immediate suzerain, had little authority over them, and the secondary princes (who were much more numerous in these provinces than elsewhere) were quite incapable of bending them to their will. Romanity was progressing, however, because it was too vast not to achieve ultimate success; this led, although very laboriously, to the partial recognition of the principal legal rules of Justinian. The feudal rulers then lost most of their prerogatives, but retained enough for the revolutionary explosion of 1793 to find more to destroy in these lands than in any others. Without this foreign assistance and support given to the opposing local elements the remains of the feudal system would have long persisted in the Electorates of the West, and would have shown as much strength as in other parts of Germany, where it has only been in the last few years that they have been finally destroyed.

Confronted by such an intractable nobility, the bourgeoisie's master stroke was the building up of the Hanseatic League, a combination of Celtic and Slav ideas (with the latter preponderant), but still animated by a sufficient amount of Germanic vigour. The cities involved welcomed imperial protection, and did not ceaselessly protest against this yoke like the cities of Italy. They willingly abandoned

the honours of authority to their sovereigns, and only looked jealously upon the free administration of their communal and commercial interests. With them, there were no internal struggles or tendencies towards republican absolutism, but a swift abandonment of exaggerated doctrines, which only accidentally appeared within their boundaries. They were characterized by hard work, greed for commercial gain, a strong attraction towards hard-headed reason rather than emotion, and a loyal devotion to concrete liberties ...

The Rhineland exercised a great influence over the whole of Germany, even including the extreme north. It was in the Rhineland that the Scandinavian kingdoms saw the kind of civilization which, drawing nearer to their own essential character, most attracted them. In the east, in the Austrian duchies, German and Celtic blood being less in evidence and the Slav and Roman elements tending to exercise a preponderant influence, people soon began to imitate Italy, though without ignoring the example of the Rhineland or even of the Slavs. Those areas ruled over by the Habsburgs were experiencing a period of fundamental change, like Switzerland, which – though doubtless in a less complicated way – was torn between its Rhenish and northern Italian models. In the ancient Helvetic territories the intermediate point between the two systems was Zürich. To complete the picture, it must be repeated that, as long as England remained predominantly Germanic, after it had almost completely absorbed the French influences produced by the Norman conquest and before Protestant immigration had begun to bring her over to our side, she was most attracted by the Flemish and Dutch. From afar they identified England's ideas with those of the Rhineland.

The third centre of civilization had its home in Paris.

Frankish colonization had been very strong in the area round this city. Here, romanity had been composed of Celtic elements which were at least as numerous as on the banks of the Rhine, but were far more hellenized. In short, it dominated barbarian influence because of sheer numbers. Germanic influence soon retreated before it. In the earliest poems of the Carolingian cycle, the Teutonic heroes are mostly forgotten or, like the knights of Mainz, represented in an odious light, while the knights of the west, such as Roland and Oliver, or even of the south, such as Gerard of Roussillon, are always the popular heroes. Northern traditions appeared more and more distorted by their Roman guise.

The feudal customs practised in this region became increasingly inspired by imperial ideas, and, constantly overcoming the resistance of the opposition, were excessively complicating the position of individuals, deploying a multiplicity of restrictions, distinctions and obligations which had never been imagined either in Germany, where the tenure of fiefs was more liberally organized, or in Italy, where it was more subjected to the prerogative of the sovereign. It was only in France that the king, sovereign over all, was able at the same time to be the under-vassal of one of his men, and, as such, was theoretically bound to serve against his own interests under pain of forfeiture.

But the victory of the royal prerogative was at the root of all these conflicts, for their continuation favoured the lower classes of the population and ruined the authority of the nobles. All who did not possess personal or territorial rights were entitled to acquire some, and, conversely, all those who had either to any degree at all saw them imperceptibly crumbling away. In this situation, so critical for everyone, antagonisms and conflicts sprang up with great violence and lasted longer than elsewhere, because

they appeared earlier than in Germany and finished later than in Italy.

The occupations of independent farmer and independent soldier gradually disappeared before the general need for protection. Similarly, there were progressively fewer knights whose only allegiance was to the king. By abandoning some of their rights out of necessity or desire, everybody bought the support of those who were stronger than themselves. From this universal interdependence there resulted many disadvantages for these people and for their descendants, an irresistible advance towards universal equality.

* * *

Hitherto I have had no hesitation in using the word *romanity* to describe the state towards which the people of western Europe are returning. To be more precise, however, I must add that this expression does not imply a situation identical to that of any age in the ancient Roman world. Just as in the examination of the latter I used the words *semitic* and *hellenistic* to give rough definition to the nature of the racial mixtures which were swiftly developing, with the qualification that these ethnic mixtures were not identical to those which had formerly existed in the Assyrian and Syro-Macedonian worlds, so it must not be forgotten that the new romanity possesses ethnic qualities which are peculiar to itself and is consequently developing capacities which were completely unknown to the old romanity. An identical basic situation, great confusion and an increasing assimilation of all special abilities by the very extensive splitting up of groups which were originally clearly differentiated – these are the common features of the two situations and what is increasingly leading our societies to imitate the Imperial Roman world. But what is

peculiar to us, at least at the present time, and what is responsible for the difference between the two situations, is that in the fermentation of the constituent elements of our race, many Germanic remnants still exercise an important and vital influence, varying according to geography – in the south, as in Provence, their influence is dissolving; but in the north, as in Sweden, their remaining strength is delaying the pronounced tendency to decadence.

This tendency, spreading from the south towards the north, has, during the last two centuries, brought the masses of the Italian peninsula to a situation very similar to that of their ancestors in the third century. Northern Italy, with the exception of certain parts of Piedmont, is little different. Spain, saturated with more directly semitic elements, enjoys a kind of relative racial unity which makes the present ethnic chaos less flagrant but which is far from allowing masculine or utilitarian elements to have the upper hand. Our southern French provinces are lost; the central and eastern provinces, together with the south-west of Switzerland, are split between the influence of the south and north. The Austrian monarchy, with an almost scientific awareness of its position, is doing its best to maintain the preponderance of Teuton elements in its Slav population. Greece and European Turkey, powerless before western Europe, owe to the inert neighbouring area of Anatolia their remaining strength, due to the infiltrations of the Germanic element at different times during the Middle Ages. The same may be said of the little states next to the Danube, with the difference that the former owe to a far earlier age the small number of Aryan influences which still seem to animate them and that in these states ethnic chaos has reached its gravest stage. The Russian Empire – a land of transition between the yellow races and the semitized and romanized nations from the

south and from Germany – lacks essential homogeneity, has only been slightly and insufficiently influenced by the noble essence, and is capable of building up only imperfectly its multiple borrowings from Hellenic, Italian and French elements and from Germanic sources. These gains still make only a very superficial impression on the masses of the nation.

Prussia, with its present borders, has more Germanic resources than Austria, but is essentially inferior to the latter, where the highly Aryanized Magyars sway the balance – not according to the standards of civilization, but according to those of vitality, with which (it cannot be emphasized too much) this book is specifically concerned.

In short, the greatest abundance of life and strength is found today – fighting a losing battle against the inevitable triumph of Roman chaos – concentrated in the group of countries which fall inside a line which, drawn roughly, begins at Tornio in Finland and, after bringing in Denmark and Hanover, goes down the Rhine at a short distance from its right bank as far as Bâle, embraces Alsace and northern Lorraine, closely follows the course of the Seine to its mouth, continues around Great Britain and takes in Iceland to the west.

In this area are the last remnants of the Aryan element, doubtless very distorted, eroded and withered, but still not completely vanquished. Here, too, beats the heart of modern society, and consequently of modern civilization. This situation has never previously been analysed, explained or understood; but the reality of it is keenly felt by everyone – so much so that many people instinctively make it the starting-point of their speculations on the future. They foresee the day when death will place its icy grip on those areas which seem to us to be the most favoured and prosperous; and, perhaps even imagining

this catastrophe closer than it is, they then seek the place of refuge where humanity will be able to take on new lustre and life. The present successes of one of the states in America seem to them to herald this most necessary era. The Western world is the vast stage on which they imagine the blossoming forth of nations which, through the inherited experience of past civilizations, will enrich our own and will accomplish things of which the world has yet only dreamt.

Let us examine this assumption with all the interest it deserves. By detailed examination of the different races which people America, and have done so in the past, we shall find the clearest reasons either for accepting or rejecting such ideas.

* * *

The remaining Anglo-Saxon elements in North America form an ethnic group which is entirely convinced of its innate superiority over the rest of humanity, and of the birthrights which this superiority has conferred upon it. Imbued with such principles (which are still instincts rather than ideas) and driven by needs far more demanding than those which prevailed when civilization had only reached its crudest forms of development, this group did not even reconcile itself, as the Germans did, to sharing their land with its former owners. It robbed them of all they had and drove them into the wilderness. It bought their land from them against their will and at very low prices; and the miserable strip of land guaranteed by solemn and repeated treaties so that these poor wretches might have somewhere to live was unhesitatingly taken from them when eventually this group became impatient not only with their presence but also with their very existence. Its rational nature and love of formulating laws

enabled it to find a thousand excuses to conciliate the cry for equality with the even more imperious cry of its own limitless greed. It invented words, theories and oratory to absolve its conduct of guilt. Perhaps it recognized, in its innermost conscience, the impropriety of its sad excuses. But this did not prevent it from continuing to exercise that right of total encroachment which makes up its prime and overriding social law.

This group is no less imperious with the Negroes than with the country's original inhabitants: it has stripped the latter of everything they possess and it has no qualms in chaining the Negroes to the earth which they cultivate on its behalf. And this behaviour is all the more remarkable because it is contrary to the humanitarian principles preached by those responsible for it. This inconsistency needs to be explained. Its actual proportions are quite unprecedented. It was not the Germans who set the example; they were satisfied with part of the land and guaranteed free use of the rest to those whom they had conquered. They had too few needs to want total possession. They lacked the subtlety of mind to think of imposing on their subjects or on foreign nations the use of liquors or pernicious materials. This is a modern idea. Neither the Vandals, Goths, Franks and first Saxons nor the civilizations of the ancient world (which were both more refined and more perverse) had ever dreamt of doing this. Nor did Brahmins or wise men feel the need to destroy everything around them which was not related to their own thoughts. Our own civilization is the only one which has ever possessed this homicidal instinct and at the same time this murderous potentiality of inflicting death; it is the only one which has constantly striven to wreak general destruction, while advocating limitless gentleness rather than anger, and even thinking itself excessively indulgent. The reason

for this is that it exists only to discover what is useful to it. Everything which is not in keeping with these tendencies harms it and, logically, all that harms it is doomed in advance and ultimately destroyed.

The Anglo-Americans, convinced and faithful representatives of this kind of culture, have acted in accordance with its laws. They are not reprehensible. They were not hypocritical in thinking themselves entitled to join in the concert of protest which the eighteenth century directed against every kind of political constraint, against Negro slavery in particular. Sects and nations are thus like women in that they enjoy the privilege of being able to defy logic and be responsible for the most surprising moral and intellectual incongruities, while still not lacking sincerity. Washington's fellow-citizens, while forcefully demanding the emancipation of the Negroes, did not think themselves obliged to set an example but rather treated the enslaved Negroes with the greatest severity and contempt – just as the Swiss, their rivals in the love of theoretical equality, still retain medieval legislation against the Jews. More than one hero of their struggle for independence exemplified this instinctive disparity between maxims and acts. Jefferson's relationships with Negress slaves, who bore him several children, were, on a smaller scale, reminiscent of the excesses of the first white Hamites ...

This republican nation displays two feelings which are in complete contrast to the natural tendencies of all the democracies which have sprung from excessive racial intermixture. First, there is a taste for tradition, for what is old and – to use a legal term – for precedents; this tendency is so pronounced and its power over people's emotions is so strong that, under its impulse, people defend England when there is good cause for animosity. In America institutions are extensively and ceaselessly modified; but there is

among the descendants of the Anglo-Saxons a marked repugnance for sudden and radical changes. Many laws imported from the mother country when America was still a colony have remained in force. Several even exhale an air of decay which we associate with memories of the feudal system. Secondly, these same Americans are far more preoccupied with social distinctions than they care to admit; at least, they all want to have them. The word *citizen* is no more popular among them than the noble title of *squire*, and this instinctive preoccupation with one's personal position has had the same effects in Canada, where it was brought by settlers of the same stock as the Americans. We frequently read in the advertisement pages of Montreal newspapers that M***, grocer and *gentleman*, has such and such a product at the disposal of the public.

This is not a meaningless custom; it indicates in the democrats of the New World an inclination towards self-advancement which completely contrasts with the inclinations of revolutionaries in the Old World. With the latter the tendency is, on the contrary, to descend as low as possible in order to reduce the highest and least numerous ethnic essences to the basest, which are given a dominating influence over everything because of their sheer abundance.

The Anglo-Saxons thus do not entirely represent what one understands, on this side of the Atlantic, by the word *democracy*. It is rather like an officer without any troops. These are men suited to dominate – they cannot dominate their equals but would willingly dominate their inferiors. In this respect their situation is similar to that of the Germanic nations shortly before the fifth century. They are, in brief, aspirants to royalty and nobility, and are endowed with the intellectual means to legitimize their views. It remains to be seen whether present circumstances will favour them. Be that as it may, are men today prepared to

confront face to face the dreaded being whom frightened decadent peoples call a barbarian? If we stand next to a Mexican, listen to him talk, and follow his frightened glances, we shall see the Kentucky rifleman. He is the ultimate expression of the Germanic race: he is the modern-day Frank and Lombard! The Mexican is right to call him an unheroic and ungenerous barbarian; but this certainly detracts nothing from his strength and power ...

In our efforts to gain a true appreciation of the extent to which the people of the United States have influenced the other ethnic groups of the New World, we have still considered only the race which founded the nation. Moreover, basing my observations on pure supposition, I have regarded this race as having preserved intact its special ethnic qualities, as well as the capacity to retain them indenifitely. But nothing is more mistaken. The American Union is in fact the one country in the world which, from the beginning of the century and especially in recent years, has experienced a vast influx of heterogeneous elements. This is a new consideration which may considerably modify, if not change, the general conclusions drawn above.

But the many new elements brought by this influx are certainly not such as to create any kind of inferiority in the Union in relation to the other American groups. The latter, mixing with the natives and Negroes, are completely despondent, and, however worthless some of the new European influences may be, they still carry with them a less strong element of decadence than the Mexicans or Brazilians. There is thus nothing in my subsequent observations which will detract from what has already been said about the moral preponderance of the northern states of America in relation to the other political groups which exist on the American continent; but the relationship between the republic of Washington and Europe is totally different.

The Anglo-Saxon descendants of the original English settlers no longer comprise the majority of the country's inhabitants, and, even supposing that the annual inflow of hundreds of thousands of Irish and Germans were maintained for some further time, the national race would still be partly extinct before the end of the century. In fact, racial intermixture has already greatly weakened it. It will doubtless still continue to give the impression of being active for some time to come; but this impression will then disappear and the empire will be completely controlled by an ethnic intermixture in which the Anglo-Saxon element will play one of the more subordinate roles. The main body of this element's original ethnic variety is, incidentally, already moving away from the coast and spreading westward, where the tenor of life is more receptive to its influence and its courageous spirit of adventure.

But what precisely are these new ethnic influences? They are a very mixed assortment of the most degenerate races of olden-day Europe. They are the human flotsam of all ages: Irish, cross-bred Germans and French, and Italians of even more doubtful stock. The intermixture of all these decadent ethnic varieties will inevitably give birth to further ethnic chaos. This chaos is in no way unexpected or new; it will produce no ethnic mixture which has not already been, or cannot be, realized on our continent. Absolutely nothing productive will result from it, and even when the ethnic combinations resulting from infinite unions between Germans, Irish, Italians, French and Anglo-Saxons join in the south with racial elements composed of Indian, Negro, Spanish and Portuguese essence, it is quite unimaginable that anything could result from such horrible confusion but an incoherent juxtaposition of the most decadent kinds of people ...

The whole experience of the past shows that a combination of already exhausted ethnic elements could not possibly produce a rejuvenated mixture. It would even be bold to predict that the republic of the New World will remain in a state of sufficient cohesion to enable the conquest of neighbouring countries. Such a great success, which would certainly give them the right to be compared with semitic Rome, is hardly probable; but even the very possibility is enough to make us take account of it. But human society may be rejuvenated and a superior – or at least different – civilization (which comes to the same thing in the eyes of the masses involved) can be created only through the agency of a relatively pure and young race. Such a race does not exist in America, which has unfortunately concentrated all its energies simply on exaggerating certain aspects (and not always the best ones) of European culture, attempting to copy the rest, and displaying a considerable measure of ignorance in the process. The Americans, then, though claiming to be a young nation, are in fact made up of all the old peoples of Europe; they are less restrained because of their more accommodating laws, but they are no more dynamic than before. During the long, sad journey from Europe to the New World, the Atlantic air does not change them. They arrive the same people as when they left. A simple change in geographical location cannot regenerate races which are more than half exhausted.

14. CONCLUSION

HUMAN history is like an immense tapestry. The earth is the frame over which it is stretched. The successive centuries are the tireless weavers. As soon as they are born they

immediately seize the shuttle and operate it on the frame, working at it until they die. The broad fabric thus goes on growing beneath their busy fingers. The two most inferior varieties of the human species, the black and yellow races, are the crude foundation, the cotton and wool, which the secondary families of the white race make supple by adding their silk; while the Aryan group, circling its finer threads through the noble generations, designs on its surface a dazzling masterpiece of arabesques in silver and gold ...

The birth, growth and decline of a society and its civilization involve factors which go far beyond the normal concerns of historians. These factors have nothing to do, fundamentally, with human passions or popular movements, materials too fragile to figure in developments of such long duration. The most decisive influences in this are the different kinds of intelligence allotted to different races and racial mixtures. These are still seen only in those manifestations which are most basic, innate and pure, most emancipated from the authority of free will, in short, in those which are the most fateful, those over which individuals and nations are completely powerless to exercise control. Thus, transcending any transitory or voluntary action of either an individual or a nation, these fundamental determining factors in life operate with imperturbable independence and impassiveness. In the sphere of total freedom where they operate and interact no caprice of an individual or nation could bring about any fortuitous result ...

A society does not, in the first instance, depend on man for its creation or preservation, and thus there is nothing for which he can be held responsible. It therefore carries with it no morality. A society is not, in itself, virtuous or vicious, wise or foolish: it simply exists. The foundation of a society does not depend on any individual or collective action. The environmental conditions to which it must be

subjected before reaching any positive kind of existence must be rich in the necessary ethnic elements, just as certain bodies (to use again a comparison which constantly springs to mind) easily absorb electrical energy and can effectively distribute it, while others have difficulty in absorbing it and have even more difficulty in making it radiate around them. It is not the will of a monarch or his subjects which modifies the essence of a society: it is, by virtue of the same laws, a subsequent ethnic mixture. A society, then, envelops its component nations as the sky envelops the earth, and this sky, which neither the fumes of swamps nor the flames of volcanoes can reach, is still, in its serenity, the perfect image of those societies which could not be immediately affected by the upsets of their constituent parts, but are, however, insidiously and inevitably influenced by them.

These racial elements impose their modes of existence on nations, circumscribing them within limits from which, like blind slaves, they do not even wish to escape, although they would not even have the strength to do so. They dictate their laws, inspire their wishes, control their sympathies and stir up their hatreds and contempt. Always subject to ethnic influence, they create local triumphs by this immediate means; by the same means they implant the germ of national disasters. Eventually, such a situation is reached that only a new ethnic development can prevent total catastrophe.

They govern individuals as rigorously as nations. In giving them (and, it is vital to note, without reservations) the benefits of a morality which they nevertheless control, they mould and shape their minds, in some way, from the moment they are born, and, while indicating certain courses, they shut off others in such a manner that they do not even allow their conclusions to be seen.

Thus, before attempting to write the history of a particular country and to explain the problems involved in such a task, it is indispensable to examine and gain full familiarity with the sources and nature of the society of which the country in question is only a small part. One must study its constituent elements, the changes it has undergone, the causes of these changes, and the ethnic state produced by the successive racial intermixtures which have taken place within it.

Such an examination would thus provide a firm basis for fruitful investigation of the subject. Since ethnic mixtures are never distributed in equal proportion over the whole area of a society, our research should be more particularized and our discoveries more rigorously controlled as they develop. All our intellectual energy, powers of memory and acuteness of judgment are necessary. No effort should be spared. We should classify history as a natural science and, relying solely on facts derived from all possible sources of information, imbue the study of history with scientific precision, preserving it from the bias which, until now, our political groupings have imposed ...

If we are to give the annals of humanity this new impulse and appearance, it is time to change the way in which they are composed, by boldly facing up to the truths which so much laborious investigation has recently brought to light. Irrational distrust would not excuse any hesitation ...

Ethnology is certainly in its early stages. But it is, nevertheless, beyond the age of its first lispings. It is advanced enough to have presented a sufficient number of informative proofs upon which we can securely build. It receives richer contributions every day. Competition between different branches of knowledge to provide it with material is so fruitful that it is scarcely possible to classify discoveries as quickly as they accumulate. Would that this

were the only kind of obstacle to this progress! But unfortunately people still refuse to appreciate ethnology at its true worth and thus do not treat it with the respect it deserves.

Its richness is wasted when it is made to depend on a particular science, mainly physiology. This field can certainly provide it with material; but, if this material is to acquire the necessary degree of authenticity as well as the special character of ethnology, it must nearly always be subjected to the control of evidence from other fields and directly or indirectly be reinforced by the comparative study of languages, archaeology, numismatics and literary tradition or history. In the second place, data cannot pass from one science to another without taking on a different appearance, and the nature of this change should be clearly ascertained before we are entitled to make use of the data. Ethnology can thus only definitely consider as having brought within its own field the physiological and other evidence which has undergone this last examination, of which ethnology alone, moreover, determines the criteria. Since it does not have matter alone as its object, and also possesses highly intellectual features, it cannot be imprisoned within a foreign scientific field, particularly the physical one, for it would then become lost in the midst of lacunae which even the boldest and most vain hypotheses could never manage to fill. It is in fact the very root and life source of history. If it is separated from history it is only so artificially, arbitrarily and to the great detriment of the latter. Let us thus continue to study it simultaneously in all fields in which history is a vital force.

But let us not hinder the constructive work of ethnology by expecting it to answer questions which it is by no means certain that man is capable of understanding. The problem of the unity and multiplicity of primitive types is such a

question. Those who have so far devoted themselves to answering it have found little satisfaction. There seem so few ways of resolving it that it seems destined to provide intellectual amusement rather than to enlighten one's understanding, and it can hardly be considered as scientific. Rather than lose ourselves in fruitless speculation, it would be better, until a new order of things is created, to devote no serious study to this problem, or at least to give it only a very minor position in such studies. The only thing which it is important to establish is to what extent racial varieties are organic and how far they are separated. If anything whatsoever can cause different racial types to blend, if, for example, a change of food and climate can make a white man become a Negro, and a Negro a Mongol, then the whole human species, even if the several million ancestors from which it has descended were completely different, must unhesitatingly be declared unitary, for it has the principal and truly practical characteristic of unitary species.

But if, on the contrary, racial types cannot blend in this manner, so that they can lose their distinctive characteristics only by intermixture with completely different ethnic types; if no external or internal influence can change their essence; and if they never lose their fundamental physical and moral characteristics (and this is no longer doubted), let us cease these frivolous digressions and announce the unavoidable and only useful conclusion: that, although descended from a single couple, human types are eternally distinct, are governed by the law of the multiplicity of species, and their primordial unity cannot and does not have the slightest influence on their destinies. Thus, if we are to do adequate justice to the imperious needs of a science which has reached a fully vigorous stage of development, we must learn how to limit and direct our

research towards feasible ends and reject all others. And now, placing ourselves within the actual field of true history – that is, of serious, not fantastic, history, of history made up of facts, not illusions or opinions – let us examine for the last time not what we believe we *may* be, but what, in a scientifically verifiable way, our eyes see, our ears hear, our hands touch ...

Omnipresent and everlasting racial intermixture – this is the clearest, most inevitable and lasting product of our great societies and powerful civilizations; the more extensive the territory and the more powerful the will to conquer, the greater will be the degree to which the resultant wave of ethnic intermixture with other originally foreign elements will effect transformations in the nature of both parties.

But if this great movement towards general fusion is to embrace every single race on earth, it is simply not enough that a civilizing medium should deploy all its energies; it is also necessary that these ethnic workshops should be built in the different regions of the world so as to operate in the particular area concerned. The negative force of distance would paralyse the expansion of the most active groups. China and Europe have only a slight influence on each other, although the Slav world acts as an intermediary between them. India has never greatly influenced Africa, nor has Assyria influenced northern Asia; and, had societies been forced to retain the heartland permanently, Europe could never have been directly seized, nor entirely dragged down into the whirlpool. It was dragged down because the elements needed to create a civilization which would serve the general pattern of development had been previously disseminated within it. In the Celtic and Slav races, it had in fact from the earliest times two amalgamating currents of influence which allowed it to enter into the

mainstream of ethnic developments when the occasion arose.

Under their influence Europe had seen the disappearance into complete submersion of the yellow essence and of white purity. Through the strongly semitized intermediary of the Greeks, reinforced by Roman colonization, its peoples gradually became more and more influenced by the closest regions of Asia. The latter, in their turn, were influenced by Europe; for while the European groups were becoming marked by an Oriental influence in Spain, southern France, Italy and Illyria, those of Asia and Africa were undergoing the influence of the Roman West on the Propontis and in Anatolia, Arabia and Egypt. When this intermixture had taken place, the influence of the Slavs and Celts, having been combined with that of the Greeks and been brought to its logical conclusion, could be carried no further. The civilization of Rome, the sixth in history and whose overriding purpose was to concentrate and fuse the ethnic principles of the Western world, did not have the strength for any independent activity after the third century.

In order to enlarge the area in which so many multitudes were already intermixing, intervention by a very powerful ethnic agent was necessary – the product, for example, of a new union between the best human variety and races already civilized. In short, there was needed an infusion of Aryans into the social centre best situated to influence the rest of the world – for without this all the sporadic kinds of life which were scattered over the earth would have continued to be completely isolated from each other.

The Germans thus appeared in the midst of Roman society. At the same time they occupied the extreme north-west of Europe, which gradually became the pivot of their influence. Successive unions with the Celts and

Slavs, and with the Gallo-Roman peoples, increased their strength without prejudicing too seriously their natural instinct for initiative. Thus modern society was born and resolutely devoted itself to fostering and developing the aggregative work of its predecessors. It discovered America not so long ago, intermixing with its indigenous races and contributing to their destruction; it has made the Slavs flow back into central Asia because of the impulse it has given to Russia; it has penetrated into the heart of India and China, and almost into Japan; it has allied itself with the Africans along the whole length of their great continent's coast; in short, it is vastly extending through its own lands and over the whole globe the principles of ethnic intermixture whose application it is now directing.

The Germanic race was endowed with all the vitality of the Aryan variety and needed it in order to fulfil the role to which it was destined. After it, the white race had no further power or vitality of which to dispose. All elements within it had become equally degenerate and exhausted. It was essential that the last labourers in the field should leave nothing that was too difficult to complete, for, besides themselves, there were no longer any capable of taking up their burden. They took that for granted. They completed the discovery of the world; they gained full knowledge of it before disseminating their crossbreeds; and they circumnavigated it in all directions. No area escaped them, and now all that remains is to inject the last drops of Aryan essence into the heart of every different nation. Time will sufficiently favour this task which will continue under its own impulse and which has no need of any additional impetus.

In view of this fact we must explain not why there are no pure Aryans, but why their presence is irrelevant. Their general role was to effect an intermixture of different

types by uniting them to each other, in spite of the problem of distances. Thus they no longer have any part to play, since this intermixture has already been largely carried out. Here, then, the existence of the finest human species, of the whole white race, the magnificent capacities shared by each, and the creation, development and death of societies and civilizations – the amazing result of the interplay of these capacities – are revealed as the fulfilment, as the culmination, as the supreme goal of all history. For the purpose of all these things is to unite the different human species; they develop and are enriched in order to accelerate this intermixture, and they die when the directing ethnic principle is completely merged into the heterogeneous elements which it assembles – and consequently when its local task is sufficiently accomplished. Furthermore, the white, and above all the Aryan, principle is so spread over the face of the globe that the societies and civilizations which it animates exclude no area, and therefore no group, from its aggregative activity. The life of humanity thus takes on an overall significance which is nothing less than cosmic in its scope. I said above that it was comparable to a vast tapestry composed of different textiles, displaying the most variegated and distorted patterns; it is even more comparable to a chain of mountains with several peaks representing civilizations, and with the geological composition of these peaks representing the different mixtures produced by the multiple combinations of the three great primordial divisions of the human species and their secondary blends. Such is the fruit of human strivings. All that serves civilization acts on society; all that attracts it extends it; all which extends it carries it further geographically; and the last stage of this development is the addition or removal of several more Negroes or Finns at the heart of the already amalgamated masses. Let

us take it as axiomatic that the ultimate aim of the toil and suffering, the pleasures and triumphs of humanity is to attain, one day, supreme unity. Once this is accepted everything else we should know follows naturally.

Viewed abstractly, the white race has disappeared from the face of the earth. It has lived through the age of the gods, when it was absolutely pure; the age of heroes, when intermixture was restricted in strength and scope; and the age of nobility, in which its capacities, though still considerable, could not be replenished from barren sources. It then progressed more or less immediately (varying according to the particular areas concerned) towards the definitive blending of all its principles as a result of its heterogeneous intermixture. Consequently, it is now only represented by hybrids; those who occupy the territory of the first mixed societies have naturally had most time and opportunity to become degenerate. As to the masses in western Europe and North America who now represent the last possible form of culture, they still seem quite vigorous, and are in fact less degenerate than the inhabitants of Campania, Susiana and the Yemen. This relative superiority, however, constantly tends to disappear; the last remaining Aryan blood, already diluted so many times, and which alone supports the edifice of our society, moves closer each day towards total absorption.

When this happens the age of unity will begin. The white principle, held in check in each individual person, will be one against two in relation to its rivals – a sad proportion which would be enough to paralyse it almost completely. It is even more deplorable when we reflect that this state of fusion, far from being the result of the direct union of the three main racial types in their pure state, will be only the useless residue of an infinite series of mixtures, and consequently of grave blemishes. This will lead eventually to

mediocrity in all fields: mediocrity of physical strength, mediocrity of beauty, mediocrity of intellectual capacities – we could almost say, to nothingness. Everyone will share this sad heritage in equal measure; there is no reason why one man should have a larger share than another; and, just as in the Polynesian islands, where the Malayan half-breeds equally represent a type whose initial composition has never been disturbed by any infusion of new racial blood, men will all resemble each other. Their size, features and bodily habits will all be the same. They will have the same amount of physical strength, the same instinctive urges and abilities; and their general level will be revoltingly low.

Nations, or rather human herds, oppressed beneath a mournful somnolence, will thenceforth live benumbed in their nullity, like the buffalo grazing in the stagnant waters of the Pontine marshes. Perhaps they will think themselves the wisest and cleverest beings that ever existed; as for ourselves, when we contemplate the great monuments of Egypt and India, which we would be so incapable of imitating, are we not convinced that our very impotence proves our superiority? Our shameful descendants will have no difficulty in finding some similar argument which will justify them giving us their pity and priding themselves on their barbarity. Disdainfully pointing to the tottering ruins of our last remaining buildings, they will say – 'That was how our ancestors so senselessly employed their strength. What can we do with this useless legacy?' The legacy we leave will indeed be useless to them; for vigorous nature will have regained universal domination over the earth, and humanity will no longer be its master, but simply a guest, like the inhabitants of the forests and the waters.

Nor will this sad situation last for a long time; for one

side effect of indefinite racial intermixture is a progressive reduction in population. When we look at ancient civilizations we see that the world used to be far more densely populated than it is today. China has never had less inhabitants than at present; Central Asia used to be a veritable ant-nest and is now quite deserted. Scythia, according to Herodotus, was teeming with nations, but Russia is now a desert. Germany is well-populated, but was not less so in the second, fourth and fifth centuries, when it endlessly threw hordes of warriors at the Roman world, followed by their wives and children. France and England seem to us neither empty nor uncultivated; but Gaul and Great Britain were not more so at the time of the Cymric emigrations. Spain and Italy no longer have a quarter of the people who covered their lands in antiquity. Greece, Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia were overflowing with people, and towns were as numerous as ears of corn in a field; they are now like a deathly wilderness. And India, although still populous, is in this respect only the shadow of its former self. West Africa, which nourished Europe and where so many colonial powers displayed their splendours, no longer contains anything but the scattered tents of nomads and the moribund towns of a few merchants. The rest of Africa similarly languishes everywhere that the Europeans and Moslems brought what the former call progress and the latter faith, and it is only the interior of these lands, where scarcely anyone has penetrated, which still retains a compact nucleus of people. But this will not last. As for America, Europe is pouring into it what blood it has; but, if one is enriched, the other is impoverished. Thus, humanity is disappearing at the same time that it is declining.

We cannot accurately calculate the number of centuries which still separate us from final obliteration. However, it

is possible to hazard a rough estimate. The Aryans and, with greater reason, the rest of the white species, had lost their complete purity by the time of Christ. If we accept that the world was created in its present state six or seven thousand years before Christ, then we see that this period was enough to wither the seed of the visible principles governing societies. When this period was over, the forces of degeneration had already taken control of the world. Just as the white race had become absorbed by the two inferior races so as to lose its true purity, the latter had undergone corresponding changes, particularly extreme in the case of the yellow race. In the eighteen hundred years which have since elapsed, the process of intermixture, although unrelenting and moving irrevocably towards its ultimate triumph, has nevertheless not been as directly effective. But, besides its influence on the future, it has greatly increased ethnic intermixture within all societies and accordingly has hastened the ultimate realization of total amalgamation. This time has thus certainly not been wasted, and, since it has laid the groundwork for future developments, and since, moreover, the three racial varieties have lost their essential purity, it would not be an exaggeration to estimate that total amalgamation will be effected in a little less time than we needed for its preparatory stages to reach their present point of development. It would thus be tempting to assign to man's domination of the earth a total of twelve to fourteen thousand years, divided into two periods: the first, which has passed, will have seen and possessed the youth, vigour and intellectual greatness of humanity; the other, which has already begun, will see its waning and inevitable decline.

I do not know whether we would be entitled to regard as the end of the world the less distant age when humanity

will not quite have disappeared but will have completely degenerated – a time before that age of death when the earth, silent and without us, will continue to describe its impassive orbits in space. Nor would it be easy to show sympathy and interest in the destinies of people deprived of strength, beauty and intelligence, if one did not remember that they will at least retain their religious faith, their last link with, and sole reminder of, the precious heritage of better days.

But even religion has not promised eternity. Science, however, while revealing our beginnings, has seemed to assure us that we must also reach an end. There is thus no reason to be surprised or moved at discovering yet another confirmation of what is already an undeniable fact. What is truly sad is not death itself but the certainty of our meeting it as degraded beings. And perhaps even that shame reserved for our descendants might leave us unmoved, if we did not feel, and secretly fear, that the rapacious hands of destiny are already upon us.

DIALOGUE WITH ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE (1853–6)

Some eighty letters survive from the correspondence between Gobineau and Tocqueville that began in 1843 and ended with the death of the latter in 1859. We present here some brief extracts concerning the racist theses of the Essay. *Though Tocqueville, the author of* Democracy in America, *had many fears about the coming age of mass politics, he strove pragmatically in all his writings to expound social doctrines that would minimize its potential evils. In the following exchanges we observe that Tocqueville, although impressed by Gobineau's genius, is horrified at his assertion of human inequality, at his fatalistic acceptance of present and future degeneration, at his neglect of any regenerative programme, and at the disastrous moral and practical consequences which his doctrines must have for the spirit of contemporaries. Gobineau's retort is that, as a purely scientific student of society, he is concerned with truth not practicality.*

TOCQUEVILLE TO GOBINEAU

October 11th, 1853

I have never concealed from you the fact that I am much prejudiced against what seems to be your fundamental idea – one which, I confess, appears to belong to the family of materialistic theories. It would even seem to be one of its most dangerous members, since it applies fatalism not simply to individuals but to those perennial groupings called *races*.

November 17th, 1853

Your doctrine is a kind of fatalism, of predestination if you wish ... You talk endlessly of races regenerating or degenerating, gaining or losing by an infusion of different blood certain social capacities not previously their own. I think that is how you put it. I must say frankly that, for me, such predestination seems closely related to pure materialism. Let me assure you that if the masses, whose reasoning always follows beaten tracks, accept your doctrine it will be extended immediately from races to individuals and from social capacities to all kinds of potentialities. Besides – whether fatalism be introduced into the material order or whether God willed the existence of various kinds of men so that some might be obliged, according to their race, to lack certain feelings, thoughts, habits and qualities that they might perceive but not possess – all this is scarcely relevant to my own concern with the practical consequences of different philosophical doctrines. Both these theories culminate in a vast limitation, even a complete abolition, of human liberty. Thus I confess that having read your book I remain, as before, extremely opposed to these doctrines. I believe that they are probably very false; I know that they are most certainly pernicious ...

... What advantage can there be in persuading base peoples living in barbarism, indolence or slavery that, such being their racial nature, they can do nothing to improve their situation or to change their habits and government? Do you not see inherent in your doctrine all the evils engendered by permanent inequality – pride, violence, scorn of fellow men, tyranny and abjection in all their forms? How can you speak to me, my dear friend, about the distinctions between *qualities which bring moral truths into operation* and what you call *social aptitude*? Are these

really different? When one has viewed for some time and at close quarters the workings of public affairs do you believe that one can avoid the conviction that the means to achieving success are identical with those in private life; that courage, energy, honesty, perspicacity and common sense are the real reasons behind the prosperity of empires as well as of families and that, in a phrase, the destiny of men, whether as individuals or as nations, is what they wish to make it?

... Please let us leave our discussion at this point. We are separated by a gulf too wide for this argument to be fruitful. There is an entire world of ideas between your beliefs and mine. I would therefore rather come to what I can praise without reservation ... In brief, let me say that this book is by far the most remarkable of your writings; that, in so far as I can judge, it reveals vast learning in the accumulation of so many facts, as well as great talent and rare insight in their marshalling. Those who approve of your fundamental thesis or who wish it to be true (and today, after sixty exhausting years of revolution, there are many in France who would aspire to have some such belief) must read it with real enthusiasm, since your book is well constructed and drives straight to its conclusion with much that is most pleasing to the intelligence. I proved sincere in criticism; please believe equally in the sincerity of my praise. Your work has great and genuine merit and it certainly puts you at the head of all those who have maintained such doctrines.

December 20th, 1853

You have taken up the very argument which has always seemed to me the most dangerous for our age ... The last century had an exaggerated and rather puerile confidence in the power of men and peoples over their own destiny.

It was the error of those times; a noble error, after all; even if it led to many follies, it also produced great things which posterity will see as dwarfing our own achievements. The fatigue of revolutions, the weakening of passions, the miscarriage of so many generous ideas and great hopes have now driven us to the opposite extreme. Once we thought that all could be transformed; now we believe ourselves incapable of any reformation. Once our pride was excessive; now we have fallen into a humility no less exaggerated. Once we believed we could do everything; today we think we can do nothing, regarding struggle and effort as henceforth useless and our blood, muscles and nerves as always stronger than our will and capabilities. This is truly the great sickness of our time. It is quite the reverse of that of our ancestors. In your book, however its arguments are organized, that sickness is encouraged not cured. Despite yourself, the work weakens still further the already lax spirit of your contemporaries.

GOBINEAU TO TOCQUEVILLE

October 15th, 1854

It is quite true that we no longer live in a very intellectual age and I well understand the disgust and annoyance which this realization inspires in you. But, as you say, my work is scarcely affected by this ... Since my methods of proof are exclusively scientific, I have come to discount any thought of popularity in a field which is so obviously outside the competence of most. Further, since I am so convinced that the present enfeeblement of mind is not only universal but also incurable, I have but one of two courses to follow: either to jump in a lake or else to carry on without the slightest concern for what is called public

opinion. Having decided upon the latter I care only for the few hundred minds still alive in the midst of the general atrophy.

March 20th, 1856

I am tormented by your constant reproach that I encourage the somnolence of those who are already only too drowsy. If I do so, then it is not through lullabies. If I corrupt, it is through acids not perfumes. Believe me, such is not the purpose of my book. I am not telling people 'You are acquitted' or 'You are condemned'. I am saying, 'You are dying. Far be it from me to pretend that you cannot conquer or be moved and agitated into spasmodic activity. Far be it from me either to encourage or to restrain. That does not concern me at all. But I am saying that you have passed the age of youth and have begun to reach that of decay. Your autumn is undoubtedly more vigorous than the decrepitude of the rest of the world, but it is autumn none the less. Winter is coming and descendants have you none. Establish kingdoms, great dynasties, republics, whatever you wish. To this I have no objection; all of it is possible. Go and torment the Chinese in their homeland, finish off Turkey, bring Persia within your sphere; all that is possible, even perhaps inevitable. I shall not contradict you, but, in the final account, the causes of your enervation are accumulating and will accumulate by these very actions and there is no longer anyone in the world to replace you when your degeneration is completed. The thirst for material enjoyment now tormenting you is a clear symptom – one as sure as the roseate cheeks of those who suffer from chest ailments. All civilizations in decay before you had it and, like you, they rejoiced in it. Having been sickened by the journalistic comments on this topic I never read them now. Well, is there anything

that I can do? By telling you what is happening and what will happen have I subtracted anything at all from your lifespan? I am no more a murderer than the doctor who announces that the end is at hand. If I am wrong, then of my four volumes nothing will remain. If I am right, then the facts will elude any desire to see them otherwise than as determined by the laws of nature.'

TOCQUEVILLE TO GOBINEAU

July 30th, 1856

You know that I can in no way reconcile myself to your doctrine. My view is so obsessive on this point that the very reasons you give in substantiation of your case increasingly confirm me in an opposition which only remains concealed because of my affection for you. You compare yourself to a doctor who announces to his patient that he is mortally ill and you ask what is immoral in that. My retort is that this act, if it is not immoral in itself, can only have consequences both immoral and pernicious. If one morning my doctor came and said, 'My dear sir, I am honoured to announce that you are mortally ill and, because this affects the most vital organs, I may also add that there is absolutely no chance of any kind of recovery', I should be tempted first to hit him. Next, I would see nothing else for it other than to put my head beneath the covers and await the predicted outcome – unless of course I had the temper which animated Boccaccio during the Florentine plague and thus, burning the candle at both ends, would abandon myself effortlessly to all my pleasures whilst awaiting the inevitable conclusion. Again, I could take advantage of the death sentence to prepare myself for eternal life. But for societies there is no everlasting life.

Thus your doctor will not count me among his patients. I would add that doctors, like philosophers, are frequently wrong in their prognostications. More than once I have seen such condemned men subsequently recovering and reproaching their doctors with having needlessly frightened and discouraged them. You will see, my dear friend, that while greatly disposed to admit your talents as an author I cannot accept the validity of your ideas.

B · ELITE MORALITY

THE PLEIADS
(1874)

Gobineau's most famous novel, Les Pléiades, *centres upon the varied adventures of three gifted young men who find themselves existing in a world of mediocrity and corruption. These are the Frenchman Louis de Laudon, the Englishman Wilfrid Nore, and the German Conrad Lanze. These are figures of an elite whose superiority is independent of social convention and social acceptance and which relies instead upon an aristocracy formed by nature. They comprise a constellation like that of the Pleiads and, as Gobineau expresses it again, they are in spirit the sons of kings. Presented here are the two set-pieces within the novel which contain explicit discussion of the nature of this superiority and of its moral implications.*

1. SONS OF KINGS

'We are three calenders, sons of kings,' said Nore. 'You would hurt my feelings considerably if you hesitated to accept this as true. That we are also blind in our right eyes is unfortunately an undeniable fact. My fear is that we may be completely blind, and that is something that we shall not know for certain until almost the end of our lives,

and then only if we succeed in acquiring, of course, the critical sense which I see that you, as well as I, are so badly provided with at the moment.'

'I accept your allegory,' retorted Laudon. 'I don't know to what degree I am blind in my right eye, but as for being a king's son that's a different matter. It would seem most unlikely.'

'That', replied Nore quickly, 'stems from the fact that you are looking at the question from one side only, and indeed from the least important one. I beg you to take the trouble of going to the root of things. When the Arab story-teller makes his heroes begin their tales with these sacramental words: "I am the son of a king", not more than once in a hundred is the character thus presented anything but a poor devil grossly ill-treated by fortune, from the point of view of his outward appearance at least. Either he is a dervish or else a shipwrecked man starving to death. Often, as in the present case, he is maimed. And never, never, never, I say, whether things turn out well or ill, is there any doubt as to the unknown Majesty from whom the person claims descent. Why then, in your opinion, make this person a king's son, when according to this description he is granted none of the paternal inheritance – no palace, no grand gardens planted with giant roses and plane trees, no Persian carpets, no Chinese vases, no horses with gold and turquoise harnessings, no harem of Mingrelian girls, indeed nothing of that which hallows and, in the view of the masses, makes desirable the fact of direct descent from a reigning monarch?

'It is because, in uttering this magic formula: "I am a king's son", the story-teller establishes from the very first word, and without needing further explanation, that he is endowed with particular and valuable qualities by virtue of which he is elevated naturally above the common herd.

Therefore "I am a king's son" does not mean at all: "My father is not a businessman, a soldier, a writer, an artist, a banker, a tinker or a station-master." Who among the listeners would ask after his father, about whom none of them cares? They are interested only in what he is in himself. The words mean: "I have a temperament bold and generous, and am ignorant of the common motives of ordinary natures. My tastes are unfashionable. I feel for myself and my likes and dislikes are not dictated by the press. My independent spirit and the most complete freedom of my opinions are the unshakeable prerogatives of my noble origin. Heaven conferred them upon me in the cradle, just as the sons of France once received the blue riband of the Order of the Holy Ghost, and I shall keep them as long as I live. Finally, as a most logical consequence of these premises, I am not content with what satisfies the masses, and, among the gems which Heaven has placed within the grasp of men, I am looking for other jewels than those which excite the common people.

'"Whence do I receive so many outstanding marks of distinction which set me so much apart from those all about me that they undoubtedly feel that I am different from them and consequently are not too well disposed towards me? Obviously it is the fact that I am a king's son, because the chief effect of royalty is to put him who possesses it beyond and above the mass of subordinates, subjects and slaves."'

'I understand you,' replied Lanze, 'and you are more right than you think. Being a king's son is altogether different from being a king. A king – good God! – a king is, most of the time, a memory, an ideal. Rarely can we recognize in a human person bearing that title the factual reality, at least in the sense that the ancients gave to this supreme word. But the essential part of it remains firmly

and eternally linked to the description of "king's son". That is someone who found the qualities you mentioned hanging about his neck from birth. Undoubtedly, through some lineage or other, he received in his very blood the superior virtues and the precious merits which can be seen in him and which could not have been transmitted by the people around him. Where could they have got them since they don't possess them? Where would the infant have acquired them since they were not to hand? What nurse's milk could have given them to him? Can such sublime qualities exist in nurses? No! What he is springs from an innate and mysterious mixture, a complete combination within himself of the noble or, if you like, the divine elements which his ancestors possessed of old in all their fullness, and which later generations by miscegenation in unworthy unions had for a time disguised, covered up, weakened, concealed, hidden, but which, never dying, suddenly reappear in the king's son about whom we are talking.'

'Bravo,' said Nore.

'You alarm me,' Laudon interrupted. 'So, to get things clear, according to you both, there are today, around the world, a certain number of people, men, women and children, of all conceivable nationalities in whose individual personalities the most valuable elements of their worthiest ancestors have succeeded in combining and driving out what had regrettably intruded by means of stultifying and enervating mixture in the course of however many preceding generations? And you say that this results in the fact that these people, to whatever social position they were born, are the true descendants of the men of Rollo, and even of the Goths and Merovingians?'

'Of course,' replied Nore. 'It's as you say. Many centuries have passed since, with the rise of slaves and sons of

slaves, modern society began its revels. The amount of roguishness has been incalculable. Countless decent people have been trampled into the pit by a host of wretches. Still, even in its depths, not all of them died. Many survived as best they could. Some clung to crannies in the rock, tufts of grass, or twigs of bushes. Slowly, slowly, they got back to the surface, filthy and battered. It took time to clean them up. Moreover, I am not so bold as to claim that they are absolutely perfect, and that is why I am introducing myself and yourselves as three calenders, king's sons, blinded in our right eyes.'

'I am struck and dumbfounded by the vision you have opened up,' said Laudon. 'Now, using your favourite word, how many king's sons do you suppose there are in the world today?'

'Well!' retorted Nore, 'how should I know? You are posing me a question about numbers without there being sufficient data to solve it. But think back a little over the number of people you know, either well or slightly. Would you see any difficulty in admitting that in Europe alone there might be about three thousand or three thousand five hundred people good in heart and mind?'

'Your calculation seems to me greatly exaggerated,' objected Conrad Lanze.

'Good heavens!' cried Laudon, 'and what do you make of all the remaining millions?'

'What shall I make of them?' replied Wilfrid, his voice assuming a harsh note of invective. 'What shall I make of them? Consider rather what they make of themselves! Look, let's go to the window and I'll show them to you.'

He was quite worked up. He opened the window wide and stepped out on to the balcony, followed by his two friends. All three leaned on the iron railing with their arms

folded. Their dinner, their talk, their discussion had lasted a long time. It was almost midnight. Everything was quiet. The earth was asleep. The waters of the lake rippled and sparkled in the moonlight.

'I wish,' said Wilfrid softly, gritting his teeth, 'I wish that instead of this peaceful scene we could see here properly and with our own eyes the kingdoms of the earth in all their glory. But let's look at them in our mind's eye. Let's think of those swarming masses, whether smartly dressed in all their finery or in rags. Exclude nobody. Do you recognize their complete barbarity, not the brave, bold, picturesque, happy barbarity of the young, but a sinister, sullen, churlish, ugly savagery which will kill everything and create nothing? You will at least be amazed by their mass, for their mass is indeed enormous. Look with wonder at its neat arrangement into three parts. At their head, the motley tribe of *fools*! They lead in everything, carrying the keys, opening the doors, inventing phrases, wailing when they are wrong and assuring you that they would never have believed that this or that could happen. Next look at the *scoundrels*! They are everywhere – at the sides, at the front and at the back. They run about, agitatedly working themselves up, and their sole purpose is to stop anything from being settled until they have settled themselves. What's the point of their being settled? Hardly has one of their gang declared that it has had its fill, than famished swarms of others rush up to take over.

'And now look at the *brutes*. The fools have unleashed them and the scoundrels are herding them in countless flocks. You, Laudon, might well ask what I make of such pandemonium. I can make of it only what it is – stupidity, destruction and death.'

'That amounts to saying that, except for your elite of three thousand or three thousand five hundred, a number

which still seems too much for Lanze, you can find no one who deserves to live!'

'I can indeed perceive merely a world of insects, differing in size and species, armed with saws, pincers, drills and other tools for ruin, intent on bringing down morals, rights, laws and customs, all that I have loved and respected – a world which burns cities, razes cathedrals, and now spurns books, music, pictures, substituting for all of them potatoes, underdone beef and rough wine. Would you want to spare such a rabble, if there was at hand a sure way of destroying them? That's for you to decide! As far as I'm concerned, lend me for one moment the thunderbolts of Jupiter and I will destroy however much is necessary of this irresponsible mass of brutes. They're totally incapable of discrimination. I don't see that they have any soul – though that is scarcely their fault. Nor should we show excessive severity towards the scoundrels. I can hardly tell you that they are the salt of the earth, but they are its brine. We can, at a pinch, turn them into something and, so long as we hang a few of them from time to time, the rest can be employed, if not honestly then at least usefully. Moreover, we have to admit that our planet produces them naturally and without excessive effort. In spite of itself the world could never either get rid of them or even perhaps do without them.

'As for the fools, I would be pitiless. They are the vain and bloody authors, the sole and detestable agents of universal decay, and my thunderbolts would rain down mercilessly upon their perverted brains. No, such a gang do not deserve to live. Indeed, an ordered world cannot survive so long as such croaking vermin exist. The eras of splendour and creativity were those when such reptiles did not crawl upon the steps of power.'

A prolonged silence followed this declaration. The three

friends immersed themselves in the impressions aroused by their conversation, by their surroundings and by the state of mind produced from their travels. At last Lanze began again.

'No doubt you're right, Nore. I can't bring myself to be interested in the mass of those who are called mankind. I suppose that, in the plan of creation, such creatures have some use, since they exist. They are in our way and we drive them on. But beauty and goodness I can only imagine and see in their absence. The moral world is, after all, in every way comparable to the vast and magnificent arc of the starry sky. My gaze only wants to seek, discover and see those glittering beings who, with ever radiant crowns, are so cleverly grouped in space and are attracted and joined by the laws of some mysterious but undeniable relationship. I know that, apart from these stars, the whole atmosphere is full, indeed saturated, with beings invisible to me, so that not a single atom is left free or vacant. Sometimes it's a burnt out meteor shooting through the silence and carrying into some small corner of these unknown depths a piece of matter or an impure breath of sulphur and noxious gas. Sometimes it's myriads of tiny animals spreading plague and typhus, or clouds of locusts bringing sterility, destruction, famine and death from one continent to another. I don't bother about these vile or evil forces. My gaze, my affection, my respect, my tenderness, my curiosity are concerned only with those luminous beings weaving in celestial orbit. I care only for the kind of close relationship with which they are preoccupied – constellations, conjunctions, groupings, whether fixed or wandering, these alone are worthy of admiration and friendship. And this idea, which is present in every age, in every kind of society, in every condition of living and under all religious laws, which is ever there in the minds of

decent people, men of conscience and power, those who can think and act and who have never failed, in isolating themselves from the mass, to describe themselves as Pleiads – this idea I regard as very right and natural.'

'Not forgetting', Nore added, 'that when they have omitted to describe themselves thus, others have not failed to do it for them. Yes, Lanze, the only course that is wise, sound and right is to join with those who are like yourself and let the rest go on their way as being indifferent, or even hostile and dangerous. We might, just occasionally, treat these others with magnanimity, but with nothing more than magnanimity.'

2. THE FLIGHT FROM THE WORLD

In this further passage we are introduced to John Theodore, the philosopher-prince of Gobineau's Ruritanian state of Burbach. With him Laudon and Nore take up again the theme of the previous discussion.

'Sire,' said Laudon towards the end of luncheon, 'I must declare, without aiming to make myself a curiosity, that nobody has ever been so cruelly torn and shattered in mind as I have. From morn to night I am assured by Mr Nore here that it is no longer possible to hold practical political beliefs, in view of the fact that, these days, states have become very large and behave autonomously by virtue of certain laws of gravity. He alleges that states break asunder without hope of repair, that they progress without anyone being able to stop them or get bogged down without any human effort serving to free them from the mire. In consequence, he concludes that, with such fatal laws, interest evaporates and that we can only allow

them to go ahead, while we simply get out of the way to avoid being crushed by the frequent and unpredictable heavings of such weighty machines. On the other hand, I have another informant who asserts that, by education, by constant striving to kindle the light of intelligence in the most numerous, dim and thick-witted masses of society, it will be possible, in the long run, to so transform their instincts that the reign of virtue will be established upon earth. Henceforth there will be no need of coercion. Laws will be the flimsiest of bonds, but no one will think of abusing his vast liberty. Earthly life will be pervaded by a kind of utopian sweetness and light!'

'I can see how two such different alternatives fill you with perplexity,' replied the prince, 'but I think I can discern another quite significant point. Twenty years ago, everybody was complaining at living in an age of doubt and relentless self-examination. It was thought that conscience had been deprived of firm foundation. There remained only desultory belief in the existence of God and in the various kinds of religious faith dependent upon this dogma or, again, in the issues of monarchism and republicanism. It was said that universal melancholy was overtaking these lost souls. This weakness had Byron as its poet, Shelley as its prophet. On the whole, I don't think that people really understood what was happening. The world was certainly turning away from idealism, but only in order to give itself over increasingly to everyday affairs, and even while people complained that they no longer had a guide they were faithfully following one. It was the passion for material enjoyment. Look where it has led mankind. People now believe, and believe firmly. They stand upon solid ground and, freed from the illusions of mysticism, of supernatural beliefs, of poetry from the heart, of vast apocalyptic visions in their thinking, they no longer

pretend to seek human brotherhood through conventional ideas of freedom, and they envisage an organization in which nations, well fed, well dressed and well housed, will form one vast and immense flock of sheep, admirably herded, tended and fattened according to the best techniques. They will be led from on high by all-powerful shepherds, who will become mortal gods brooking no reply, with whom it will be folly to argue, whose rights and powers will be limitless, and who will insist that from generation to generation the beasts under their care should laud them to the skies. I don't know if this conception will prevail, or rather, more frankly, I think it impracticable. The world has already had some such examples in ancient Egypt and under Inca rule. But, for such systems to be practicable, one needs homogeneous populations of infantile peoples, and modern Europe will always contain enough hot-blooded, impatient and noble spirits to make impossible the permanent imposition of so stultifying a regime. What we shall see will be essays in this direction, abortive attempts ended in clashes, clashes producing bloodshed, and blood thus spilt leading on to the most savage and degrading anarchy.'

'That is just my view,' cried Nore. 'Everything is pointless, except the assiduous and constant creation of makeshifts which will provide a few more or less brief moments of peace and quiet for the sick body of Europe. Statesmen will be merely the suppliers of rather ineffectual plasters, and distillers of opium, morphia, chloral and other soporific cure-alls, and, after a few months or a few years, they will see their patient relapsing into convulsions. The very name of the illness is evidence that it is incurable – it is none other than senility.'

'But what about religion?' Laudon exclaimed. 'Isn't religion very powerful? And if we managed to revive it

wouldn't that be a very good omen? Now, it is to be noted that churches are packed with the faithful and religious belief is undergoing an unexpected degree of renaissance. Never has so great and widespread a reverence been shown for matters of religion.'

'Faith did not save the ancient world,' replied the prince shaking his head. 'When in a rush all those calamities fell upon the Roman Empire, paganism was at that moment purer and wiser and loftier in its ideas and dogmas than it had ever been in its history. Its morality had been sublimated, its beliefs refined. The idea of a single God, full of greatness and goodness, had developed out of its mythological chaos in the noblest way. And it was not just a few obscure philosophers, eloquently spreading their views in the schools, but also rich senators and wealthy nobles who were giving general edification both through their principle and by their equally exemplary behaviour. And yet that world was dying. The virtues of the few could not give it back its life or vigour or energy or authority. That world too was old, old just like ours has become. It was dying and it had to die. All its merits could not prevent the blood in its veins from becoming stagnant and cold.'

'Ah yes,' cried Laudon, 'but that was because all its beliefs were wrong, and error is accompanied by death.'

'Are you quite sure of that?' retorted the prince swiftly. 'The whole empire had only been flourishing, energetic and powerful at the very time when its errors were most deserving of condemnation and when its intoxication had turned into madness. I mean that the festivals of Venus, the Lupercalia – the depravity of one, the brutality of the other – had never for a moment put a brake upon the triumph of Roman prosperity. Believe me, the ancient world was dying, not because it was in the wrong but because it had come to the end of the time allotted for its

life-span and its body, withered with age, was being trampled upon by youthful vigour from a different source.'

'Sire, if this is so, then you agree with Nore! He's listening to you with quite visible satisfaction and because of your able defence he is refraining from saying a single word on his own behalf.'

'I'm delighted that Mr Nore is of my opinion,' smiled John Theodore in reply. 'I find it encouraging.'

'You are too kind, Your Highness,' said Nore bowing.

'And as for me, I'm reduced to silence,' exclaimed Laudon, 'and I must conclude that from now on there's nothing more for us to do. We must withdraw from everything, sit on the ground in a corner and, if possible, be within reach of running water, so that, while twiddling our thumbs, we shall have at least the only rational distraction left, which is to see something flowing.'

'You're wrong,' John Theodore replied, 'and rather than have my views summarized thus I should certainly advise everybody – I mean everybody worthy of receiving advice – to use their remaining lifetime, even if not forced to do so, in creating those makeshifts we spoke of just now.'

'What, then, does Your Royal Highness think?' asked Wilfrid, half guessing already.

'I think that a decent man, a man who feels that he has some soul, has now, more than ever, the strict duty of falling back upon himself and, since he can't save others, of striving for his own betterment. That is the essential task in times like ours. Everything that is being lost by society does not disappear but takes refuge in individual lives. The mass is petty, wretched, shameful and repugnant. The isolated being can rise above this and, just as in the ruins of Egypt, amidst heaps of rubble, broken and unrecognizable fragments, walls that have collapsed or subsided and are often difficult to repair, there will have

survived some colossus or some obelisks thrusting into the sky which, by their very height, preserve an idea (perhaps even an exaggerated one) of the nobility of the temple or town, now razed to the ground for ever, so in the same way these isolated men, still more remarkable and praiseworthy than their forerunners, can help to preserve our conception of what God's noblest and finest creatures ought to be like. Such people existed even at the very height of Roman decadence. There were many such men, many more than had been realized before, and they were to be found among pagans and Christians alike. For we mustn't think that all those who professed the new religion were equally free from the wretchedness of the time. Legend deceives us on this point. Most of the zealots of the new religion from Judaea were weak when confronted by adversity and even more so in the face of prosperity. If already, in the time of the apostles, there were Ananiases and Sapphiras, then just imagine how many more there were under Constantine's successors! The Fathers of the Church are sparing neither in their indignation nor in their sarcasm regarding the luxury, frivolity and moral baseness of Christian ladies. They depict them shocking the towns with displays of laxity and scandalous behaviour. Noble minds were rare among them, just as much as among the pagans! But they were there upon both sides and it is of those that I am speaking. It is those that I say we must try to imitate, and it is like them that we must act. We have to work upon ourselves, improving the good we have within us and spurning the evil, stifling our worst parts, or at least restraining them. From now on that is our duty – and it is the only duty of value.'

'In short,' said Laudon smiling at Nore, 'we must contrive to be reckoned among the Pleiads?'

To this Nore nodded his agreement.

THE RENAISSANCE
(1877)

The polarization of the elite and the mass is further illustrated by Gobineau's philosophical drama La Renaissance. *It is in the Renaissance, to which fundamentally he is hostile because of its association with latinization, that Gobineau chooses to depict more elite-figures and to emphasize the moral implications of their superiority. It is a work about heroes: Caesar Borgia dreaming of domination and Julius II of freeing Italy from the foreigner; Michelangelo and Raphael exhibiting the superiority of individual artistic genius in a period of political corruption. In short, it is a study of great men in the midst of decadence. This brief extract from the speech of Pope Alexander VI to Lucretia Borgia asserts concisely the typically racist belief in an elitist ethic implying moral predestination by blood.*

'Know from henceforth that, for the kind of person whom destiny calls to dominate others, the ordinary rules of life are reversed and duty become quite different. Good and evil are transferred to another and higher plane. Then the virtues which might be applauded in an ordinary woman would in you become vices, simply because they would only be the source of obstacles and ruin. Now the great law of the world is not to do this or that, to avoid one thing or pursue another. It is to live, to enlarge and develop our most active and sublime qualities, in such a way that from any sphere we can always strive to reach one that is wider, more airy, more elevated. Do not forget that. Go straight ahead. Simply do as you please, in so far as it serves your

interest. Leave weakness and scruples to the petty minds and to the rabble of underlings. There is only one consideration worthy of you – the elevation and greatness of the House of Borgia, the elevation and greatness of yourself.'

C · FRENCH CRISIS

Brought together here, for the first time in English, are extracts from three of Gobineau's essays upon the condition of France during and after the catastrophic defeat by Prussia in 1870 and the bitter experience of the Paris Commune in the following year.

These essays all remained incomplete and were unpublished during Gobineau's lifetime. The first, Ce qui est arrivé à la France en 1870, *written in 1870–71, emphasizes that French military defeat was the consequence of a more profound and long-term moral decomposition. The second piece,* La Troisième République Française et ce qu'elle vaut, *composed in 1877, rails against the chimeras of the republican devotees of Equality and castigates the various royalist groups for the cowardice and indecision which prevent them from obtaining the power and influence which should be theirs. Nearly all that survives of the final piece,* L'Instinct Révolutionnaire en France, *dating from the same year, is presented here. In it Gobineau argues that, despite the fact that France's need is for order and repose and that all her politicians claim to accept this as their goal, from the welter of conflicting political ideas there results nothing but revolutionary disorder.*

In these essays Gobineau rages against the social and political corruption of France. Here moral decay, materialism and excessive national vanity, together with the false political ideas of democracy, liberalism, egalitarianism and socialism, are attacked in lively polemic. Though Gobineau claims to see these as the symptoms *of racial crisis, it should be noted, as suggested in the Introduction, that, in reality, it is his much earlier concern with*

this very kind of social and political corruption that led him to seek an all-embracing explanation of decay. We thus see here not merely his bitter reactions to 1870 and the Third Republic but also the later reflection of those political and social prejudices which originally put him on the road to devising a racial diagnosis of contemporary ills.

FRANCE IN 1870
(1870–71)

I WANT to describe what happened to France in 1870. This ancient kingdom which had successively become a republic, then an empire, and then a kingdom again, and so on, was deeply revered. Like ancient Rome, it took a pride and pleasure in this. But suddenly all this was interrupted by the most prodigious catastrophe that it, and perhaps even the world, had ever known.

Nothing similar will be found in the history of the other European nations. The most outstanding disasters which have befallen them in the past were less considerable than that which we have seen in France and, quite frankly, even the misfortunes of the ancient monarchies of Asia, which saw a dynasty perish and a state transformed in one night, were in fact only superficially similar to the complete collapse of France which startled the world in the year 1870 ...

What France has undergone is not a series of defeats or simply the disastrous effects of being conquered: it is the occupation of twenty-five of its provinces, the seizure of its capital, and an enormous breach in its wealth. All nations have known similar miseries; none has been destroyed by them and certainly none has even risked losing its honour because of them. It is not only this which France has suffered.

It has seen that the so generously lauded skill of its generals was composed of nothing but ignorance and boasting; that the brilliant appearance of its armies covered with the thinnest varnish the most blatant indiscipline, with the indifferent officer openly arguing with the insolent

soldier; that its military administration was a deplorable spectacle of ineptitude and dishonesty; that its civil administration was ceasing to work and was becoming impotent as soon as circumstances demanded a little more than the normal routine; that the mass of the population, and all the country dwellers, not only refused to help their oppressed native land, but even regarded this refusal as a laudable example of domestic prudence. They also saw that France, previously praised for its warlike qualities, proved to be the most indolently pacific and foolishly passive of all nations; that the city dwellers, the majority of them converted to these reassuring doctrines, only left the towns to form bands of ruffians who had no honour or conscience, talent or vigour. Attempting to profit from the extent of the upheaval caused by the German victory, and to satisfy absurd ambitions, they marched on the government, just as the enemy was marching on the capital – victorious like the Germans, they unleashed on the panic-stricken country their battalions of felons disguised as patriots. These so-called patriots reduced the French countryside to an unimaginable, shapeless expanse of rubble, crushed bricks and mortar, with walls toppled one upon the other. Nobody knows who will rebuild all this or if it will ever be cleared away; and in the middle of it all, miserable herds of people pass each other in the mud, howling, shouting, waiting, hoping and weeping, but still managing to find the means, time and inclination to brag and, especially, to create a great noise. This is France: this is what has become of the heritage of Philip Augustus, St Louis and Louis XIV.

Evidently this situation could not have been brought about simply by the collaboration of a few able Prussians. For a country to disintegrate like this, the disease must wreak its work from within; the wounds inflicted by the

foreign assailant produce cuts, but never this purulent liquefaction of the marrow and the blood. One thing is certain: France has arrived at its climacteric year. In 1870 it saw and underwent what it should never have experienced ...

By the very fact that the French were not only convinced but also desired to be convinced that what they termed the principles of 1789 embodied a gospel newly sprung from their heads like a hitherto unknown Minerva, they believed in good faith that they were designated as the sole apostles of the goddess. It was for them to preach reason, liberty and right conduct; it was for others to kneel, listen, learn and obey. Thus the nation became increasingly confirmed in the solid conviction of its matchless superiority and louder than ever it avowed that from France everything emanated and that she was indebted to none. Consequently, looking less and less upon what was not hers and hers alone, she became concerned solely with herself.

Just as during the eighteenth century so-called intellect had blinded her to her deficiencies, so during the period of the Republic and Empire revolutionary massacre, military depopulation, fear, most degrading slavery, all disappeared before what was called *glory*. To the view, already established by the efforts of the preceding century, that the French were the cleverest people in the world was now added the further belief that they were absolutely invincible. Though between 1790 and 1793 they were very often beaten; though it was indeed the numerous setbacks in Italy which themselves contributed so strongly to increasing the fame of General Bonaparte's victories; though that prestigious conquest of Egypt (to which it has always been difficult to assign any practical national utility) ended quite simply in the capture by the English of a French army and in the annihilation of the navy; though, like

harbingers, events in Portugal and Spain announced only too well the disasters of 1813, the fall of 1814, the obsequies of 1815 – despite all this, there were by 1820 none in France who recalled anything other than Austerlitz and Jena. Nothing else had ever existed. This belief was thus left in an utterly invincible position and, since between then and the Crimean campaign there was no serious military challenge, it went on confirming itself increasingly, moulded and hardened by national vanity, and, being twinned with the belief in intellectual superiority, it became an indestructible pillar of faith.

Under the Restoration there was, we must grant, a sort of doubt or hesitation at the bottom of the public mind as to this self-arrogation of such absolute supremacy over the other peoples of the world. Those called the Romantics showed a liking for foreign literature and were even passionate in commending it. At the outset these literary innovators were mostly royalists and they underwent the influence not only of Madame de Staël's famous work on Germany but even more of the impressions and ideas which the *émigrés* had picked up while frequenting the salons of Berlin, Vienna and London. Certain statesmen of the period, like the Duc de Richelieu for example, had taken too much part in events occurring in countries different from their own and had experienced too many contacts with interests, habits and thinking of quite various kinds to share the dogmatic opinions prevalent around them upon the subject of France's alleged superiority. This is what put so strongly upon the foreign policy of the Restoration the mark of rational communication between one government and another. There were thus no more of the kind of claims which were, in principle, absolutely inadmissible except upon a battlefield in the twilight of victory. The whole diplomacy of the Empire had con-

sisted in swashbuckling through chancelleries. That of Louis XVIII, of Charles X and – after the overthrow of July 1830 – of Louis Philippe was really a work of intellect, striving by methods which good sense and moderation, fairness and realism could all equally declare capable of obtaining a result which would produce the most benefits and the fewest drawbacks.

It was precisely because the Restoration and the government of Louis Philippe strove in their relations with the courts of Europe to follow a line of conduct which did not assume absolutely and publicly the pre-excellence of the French nation, with all the infinite prerogatives derived therefrom, that the French nation, in its turn, lost its taste for their ways of proceeding and unhesitatingly accused them of desiring its disgrace, of straining for its humiliation, of prostrating its dignity at the feet of powers which it had been accustomed, so it thought, to rule and conquer. In short, both the elder and younger Bourbon lines were no more fortunate in politics than romanticism had been in literature. In turn they had to fall and France, passing with alacrity from the arms of the Republic of 1848 into those of the restored Empire and declaring, proclaiming and believing itself to be more than ever before the arbiter of the world, a nation without peers, found itself ever more isolated ...

For eighty years Europe, annoyed, irritated and wearied, has watched France lurch from one revolution to another. This most elegant and heroic of countries, although a model for the whole world and the object of universal attention, pays no heed to anyone. It does not bother to learn anything from others, for the excellent reason that it thinks it knows everything. This country, however, brought about the moderate revolution of 1789, the brutal revolution of 1792, the timorous revolution of 1794, the ignoble revolution of 1795, the bold revolution of 1796, the

Empire, the First Restoration, the Hundred Days, the Second Restoration, the July Revolution, the Republic of 1848, the Second Empire and the Republic of September 4th, 1870 – so that it has had an average of about six years to enjoy each of these new governments and, each time, its upheavals have invariably produced reverberations throughout Europe or at least caused it some anxiety ...

France is a country where the nobility does not exist, where the bourgeoisie is no more preponderant as a political class, where the people's wishes are in harmony with those of the administration, and where religion is a purely administrative affair, like everything else. Bureaucrats of every imaginable kind and category go on rapidly and endlessly multiplying – they are at the same time everything and nothing, for, being the members of an anonymous and irresponsible force, they have no individual existence or value; they are the tentacles and suckers of a polyp; moreover, they may be cut off without harming the monster, for many others will grow in their place ...

The French administration – sovereign, real, effective, and all-powerful in the area between Belgium and Spain – has not succeeded in enlightening the peasants, in elevating the minds of the workers or to the slightest degree in educating its bureaucrats. What it has done (and what, to be honest and fair, we must emphasize) is to improve enormously the material situation of the peasants, workers and bureaucrats. In many fields it has made it unnecessary for them to act on their own behalf, even firmly forbidding them to do so, being justifiably confident of satisfying their needs far better than they themselves could do. It has allowed them to live better and longer, giving security to the ill, disabled, crippled and deformed, and satisfying every common and crude instinct – the love of food and drink, of a warm room and of bodily pleasure. Quite

unconsciously and unintentionally (to be fair we cannot accuse it of conscious design), it has fostered a total and naive lack of interest in all so-called moral virtue – to such an extent that if any urge towards a noble idea appeared in the three kinds of people we have just been discussing (bureaucrats, peasants and workers) it would be seen purely as a manifestation of romanticism. Being isolated, it could only compromise the reputation for common sense and practicality of the person in question, without the least chance of realization.

I would like to be able to say that this benevolent, irritating but easy-going government has at least managed to achieve a lasting solution to the passions and hatreds of our society, and that all those devoted to the cult of materialism have for ever become gentle and kind and truly human. Moreover, one of the main claims of the nineteenth century is to have put an end to the eruptions of brutality which characterized barbarian times. Unfortunately, it is by no means certain that we possess this very useful and appreciable compensation. If we added up all the acts of violence committed from the beginning of the century to the present day, we would certainly be far more hesitant in accepting this alleged reform in social manners. Many wars have been waged and many massacres have taken place; kings have been killed as frequently as during the Byzantine Empire, and it is clear that most of what is now called science is directed towards the discovery of new means of destruction. These means which we have been privileged to discover are of unparalleled atrociousness, and we are still not satisfied. As to military slaughter, its extent and horror can now hardly be improved upon. Thus, to maintain a clear view of the truth of things, it is best to make no comment on the supposed peacefulness of modern life and not to accept such a claim without further investigation.

THE THIRD FRENCH REPUBLIC (1877)

1. THE REPUBLICAN ILLUSION

The characteristic feature of the Republic in France is the fact that no one wants it but everybody hangs on to it ...

When the true Republic actually came to power in France in 1793, 1848 and 1871, people saw what it did and learnt what its aims were. Results speak for themselves and render abstract theorizing superfluous. The republic sought to contain, pacify and silence its followers with the least possible protest; its leaders fed greedily on despotic power and good living; driven by jealousy, they overthrew each other. In 1793 they guillotined one another. In 1848 they had learnt the lesson of history and no one dared to precipitate a repetition of the events of 1793. In 1871 their appreciation of history was not so good and they were more passionate. They were driven to try to imitate their predecessors of 1793, but they were not given sufficient time and thus had to restrain their essays in assassination. Had they been given a little more time, they would have followed unhesitatingly in the true tradition of killing each other. In 1793 they had had more leisure, and so events were taken to their logical conclusion; everyone who had escaped had himself made into a baron and found everything for the best. In 1848 nothing was lacking to make the June insurrection a success; events were then following their natural course; M. Ledru Rollin, like M. de Lamartine and General Cavaignac, was close to the scaffold. The

last of their decimated successors would have become barons, had not the exasperated intervention of the provinces, by a splendid stroke of good fortune, swiftly suppressed the revolt, nipped it in the bud and paved the way (so it was thought) for a new future.

But things turned out differently. What perished in June was not only the mother of the Commune of 1871, but the Republic itself, its good mistress and educator. And within a year the whole country, thoroughly wearied, wished for absolute power to lie in the hands of a single person, and it was not its fault if it obtained this programme in a modified form. Perhaps, given a second opportunity, its deepest and most heartfelt wish, and its natural instinct, would be better satisfied. This is the usual fate of the attempts to bring about a so-called Republic in France ...

For the majority of people devoted to the cult of the word *republic*, the chimera they pursue is equality, and by equality some people understand that everyone will successively possess every kind of quality. Artists willingly present this bauble to the masses. Others, on an even less solid intellectual base and more greatly endowed with the firm resolution never to let go of what they are trying to seize, consider as a very satisfactory kind of equality that which placed a Marshal's baton in the soldier's knapsack. Supposing, for a moment, that their wish is fulfilled, let us consider the theory which has resulted from it. This is no less than one of the most admired, advocated and fundamental bases of modern French society; it is neither more nor less than the clearest and best defined of the so-called principles of 1789. The entire eighteenth century was proud to prepare its coming. It represents, in fact, the rule of merit, triumphing solely through its own legitimate ability. Let us see what this means in practice.

Exactly what does it mean in China, where this great principle of 1789 has been known and practised for centuries, and undoubtedly produced the mandarinate? Since everyone was called on, and all could be elected, everyone concluded that he had certain imprescriptible rights. Thus, as soon as it was shown that success could only be enjoyed by an elite, there was born the dangerous tribe of the 'unappreciated' and the discontented. Once birth, heredity and the possession of certain definite, tangible advantages ceased to form the basis of social privilege, these privileges came to be regarded as the inherent right of every citizen. Thus everyone, in the name of equality, concluded that he, too, had 'merit' and noisily demanded his consequent rights. Every individual is thus supposed to be worth just as much as any other individual, provided that he has the so easily recognized quality of 'merit'. It is said that in the ancient world these rights or advantages simply consisted in the solemn wearing of a crown of smallage, olive, ivy or any other herb. I would like to believe this. But this is not how things are in modern times; when one has merit today, one must be given a well-paid position, and, by virtue of this very principle, when one has this position, one must be declared fit to be awarded an even more highly paid position as soon as possible – and so on. This is the result of merit ...

It must not be forgotten that what I am trying to show is how, fundamentally, every different kind of republican that now exists in France in fact wants something quite different from a Republic. We have thus established what the worthless residue of egalitarian capacities, which compose the visible part of the nation, passionately claims to maintain: equality, the consequent doctrine of seniority, favour, and the ultimate aim of progress. And all this only leads to a tendency towards servitude. Let us now examine

the other side of the question: some tell us that we are progressing towards republicanism, leaving the plain and climbing the mountain. Behold the panorama of mountain tops where the so-called progressive parties are camped: what are their demands?

Liberty? – They demand it no more than the worthy people whose programme we have just surveyed. Equality? – Not at all. They aspire after fraternity, but to obtain it they need organization, and what makes organization possible is dictatorship: *reges et greges*, shepherds and their flocks. If they were left completely to themselves the flocks would not find the meadows where it is best for them to graze; they would want to eat either too much or too little; they would prefer clover to twitch, barley to oats, corn to rye; they would want to remain there at the wrong time or would like to leave when they should remain. Powerful shepherds armed with good, strong crooks are therefore necessary. But shepherds are not enough: dogs (and dogs who bite) are also needed. All this does not add up to a republic and it is the very opposite of the showy advantages of this republic which has been the object of so much discussion for over a century.

It must be admitted, however, that the supporters of radical theories (that is, men speaking in the name of the working classes) do in fact profess ideas which are more politic than those of the people we have just discussed. They see man from a collective perspective and have an absolutely clear vision of their ideal society of which the others are incapable.

They would extensively abolish property for individuals, but would retain its applications and advantages for the whole of mankind. Under their leadership, people would be able to conduct their lives only under very restricted conditions, but they would always be clothed, fed and

housed. The great mass of mankind would be tightly straitjacketed into a kind of total happiness and humility. But people would at least be able to keep what was given to them, and would probably have all that was promised them, for that would not be very much. In spite of these advantages, two things are frightening: first, the immense power of the shepherds, their irresponsibility towards their flock, and the quasi-divine character which these perpetual stock-raisers would swiftly assume. Secondly, the hieratic splendour and luxury with which these illustrious and sublime people would undoubtedly surround, heighten and draw attention to their august roles. People would kneel down to murmur the names of the sacrosanct inspector and the divine delegate. This certainly arouses grave doubts. What is equally difficult to swallow is the state of completely stupefied passivity to which humanity, stuffed with potatoes and cheap meat, would of necessity find itself reduced if such startling innovations were to be realized.

In every political system which revolves round the socialist idea and prides itself on realizing it, there are still two pivots which are essential to the working of the machine: first, the abolition of the idea of a personal God and of the different religions derived from the ancient forms of faith; and secondly, the uncompromising castration of all learning, mutilated so that it must no longer investigate or produce anything but lessons which are positive and immediately applicable to a purely practical aim. Christianity in particular must be utterly destroyed and its last roots ruthlessly torn up. There is nothing more logical than this. Christianity is a very prominent element in the notion of personal individuality and the development of human consciousness. But henceforth only what is collective is acceptable and individual man must be

fully assimilated into humanity in general. Hence the hatred with which the materialist schools persecute religions.

2. THE MONARCHIST FAILURE

It is beyond doubt that France is predominantly republican. But the republicans themselves are of lymphatic temperament, and are all resolved to work only for their own self-advancement and the country's exploitation. They are passionate enthusiasts of dictatorships and bitterly divided as to what kind of programme each of these dictatorships would pursue. Their sole preoccupation is to prevent the formation of the particular kind of government which is antipathetic to them, but they are quite prepared to accept any other government. They are republicans, moreover, only because the republic assures them that it exists – if the occasion arose they would let its neck be wrung without their batting an eyelid.

This state of affairs must really convince people of the indestructibility of this system 'which divides us least'! And how well it augurs for the attainment of the ideal government of a 'republic without republicans', which is regarded as the most satisfying kind of government one could aspire to achieve! Such a government would favour what another no less famous and much used phrase calls 'common sense, that eminently French quality'.

To what degree of moral and intellectual abasement must a nation have fallen to allow itself to be called 'sensible' when, generally once every ten years, it is found piling curses upon itself for ever having elected and given massive support to the government which it has just overthrown! This government, previously so well loved,

now dishonours, degrades and corrupts the people who elected it – and the people cry this out to the world! They began, however, by believing – and God knows how intolerably dissidents were treated! – that the Terror gave them liberty, the Directory rest, the Empire stability, the Restoration peace, the July dynasty order, the Second Empire tranquillity; and, to be fair, they still only ask of the present regime that it should terminate its office peacefully. But they now say that the Terror led to slavery, the Directory to theft, the Empire to servitude, the Restoration to inertia (by way of the sacristy), the July dynasty to the debasement of life through love of lucre, the Second Empire to the most deplorable corruption through the pursuit of pleasure; and the present regime has apparently lost all contact with reality and cannot even believe it is possible for it to leave office without causing an upheaval. And this is a nation whose distinctive quality is said repeatedly to be common sense! For sixty years its excesses have earned it a multitude of revolutions and three foreign invasions. There is still more to come, yet the people laugh and repeatedly and complacently invoke their 'common sense'! ...

In a different environment and in more favourable conditions than those in which they find themselves, the French royalists would certainly count among the best and most constructive forces in French life. They would then be considered as one of the mainstays of our society.

They are certainly justifiably reproached for not putting forward a truly original political theory. The socialists have a programme, even several. The imperialists have one – perhaps it is a little vague and undefined, leaning sometimes towards the right, sometimes towards the left, delighting some and frightening others. The Constitutional Party offers a panacea of parliamentarism, prescribing and

administering it in different ways and accepting or rejecting various mixtures. Their system is a skilfully concocted medicine which has poisoned the patient four or five times in the last sixty years; but, according to them, only because of errors concerning minor details. The legitimists, or rather the royalists, have nothing which is really their own ...

Despite all efforts, for the past thirty years they have been unable to progress further than the Charter of 1814 – amended, modified, corrected and enlarged by borrowings from subsequent constitutions, all of them systems which are not authentically their own and whose initial begetters were entirely different from them. They were thus led to advocate various kinds of limited or gradual franchise, and sometimes even universal suffrage. They find themselves in chaotic disagreement on this point; they quarrel like the other parties, but the borrowed ideas with which they apostrophize each other are less original.

This is not the kind of behaviour which will gain the support of a bored, blasé, dejected nation, which would perhaps find support in facts but is fed on rhetoric, and shows that it already has a large store of phrases which it can repeat without any help at all. And it is because the royalists cannot propose anything new and authentically their own, and of which they would be the sole dispensers, that their true and great strength – the irrefragable authority which, in spite of everything, they possess – cannot possibly be used.

For they do have strength and authority. They are made of a metal which nothing has been able to utilize; but nor have the masses been persuaded, in their heart of hearts, that it is valueless. It is not known how this metal may be extracted or subsequently used; often people even angrily and scornfully declare that it is in fact quite useless. But people's attention is constantly directed towards this

unknown force, and returns to it; and a kind of odd impulse or fear seizes its most irreconcilable enemies when they muse on its hidden qualities ...

The royalist idea was so strong in France after the disaster of 1871 that the majority of the country became attached to it, and held on to it; and this gave rise to the most singular happenings. I have already observed that after nineteen years of the Empire, eighteen years of the government of Louis Philippe and one year under the Republic – which adds up to thirty-eight years of interregnum in all – the majority of the people applied themselves to sending to the Assembly in Bordeaux as many royalists as possible.

Totally lacking a definite programme, these representatives proved incapable of providing the solution to the present difficulties which was expected of them. As I said above, they could only propose and advocate a vague and completely parliamentary course of action which incorporated the principles of 1814, 1830 and 1848. It is all very well to tell France that it will benefit from a monarchy but this monarchy still needs a throne on which to sit, laws by which to govern and tools with which to work – and nobody has been able to find the throne, the laws and the tools.

This chaotic situation was already perfectly evident even in Bordeaux, and when the Assembly came to Versailles, it was quite impossible to ignore it, especially since the royalists, resorting to the great national excuse, declared themselves in desperation, deceived and betrayed. This is always the last expedient of a French army when it does not know what to do.

It is important to notice that the public showed itself, on this occasion, to have more confidence in the royalists than the royalists had in themselves.

THE REVOLUTIONARY INSTINCT IN FRANCE (1877)

From the Atlantic to the Alps people's imaginations are restlessly moving about in the fog of a permanent illusion. Well-intentioned people (who are by far the most numerous) hold it as axiomatic that the oscillating state of the social and political order is solely the consequence of a testing time of change. They say that their fathers have led them from a particular point of instability towards a future resting place. Some imagine this peace will be found in the restoration of the monarchy, based on any kind of principles, provided that they are new; some in the definitive establishment of a vaguely defined democratic state; and some in an egalitarian despotism, an intelligent dictatorship, which would be the brilliant dispenser of great popular happiness and sumptuous prosperity. Everyone, in fact, considers that the events of 1789 must one day exhaust themselves and that France will then live in peace.

Everyone wants to live in peace, and in this respect there are no revolutionaries. The political fanatic, whether saturnine or inflamed by discussions in the garrets and studios of Paris, certainly does not wish that his work, once done, should be constantly assailed by his opponents and pounded by their battering-rams just as he now concentrates on undermining what there remains of the old society. As soon as he succeeds in laying the first foundations of his agrarian state, he will become its impassioned defender; he will mobilize for its defence every possible law of *lèse-majesté* learnt in the ruins of the royal chancelleries. He will be a conservative, pouring curses on all

the impious people who dare to dream of opposing his system of government. It must thus be agreed that the most ardent of political activists is not a revolutionary. On the other hand, we must also admit that the most fearful royalist, the most uncompromising legitimist, and even the most rigorously ultramontane Catholic imaginable, are at the present time abettors of revolution. They do not have what they want. Or rather, whereas the socialist does not yet have what he wants, the former has lost what he once had, which is just as frustrating. One wants to realize his desires, the other to regain what he has lost. One wants to knock the present edifice of government over towards the left, the other wants to knock it over to the right. Both are perfectly prepared to undergo a time of upheaval and even violence to achieve their aims. This is how everyone in France is in reality (and for the same reasons) both completely and incompletely revolutionary by nature, temperament, deed and consent.

There is yet another reason that this should be so. Absolutely no one has the remotest idea of what it is he wants or of exactly what he must do to find the ideal peace which is everyone's fondest dream. Monarchical government is easily said! But what exactly would it consist of? It can take on many forms – we can choose between systems as different as that adopted by the King of England and that of which the King of Dahomey is so proud. The French royalist is in the process of deliberating his choice and one cannot help admiring the extreme independence of his views when he is made to define what he wants. He will have nothing of what still exists or (especially) of what has existed in the political field; what he wants is an ideal. He is not very articulate, but his views are deeply sincere; he wants innovation, that is, revolution.

The royalist will certainly admit a basis for his pro-

gramme; all his adversaries have theirs. His is the hereditary right of male descendants in the House of Bourbon, just as the socialists' is the happiness of the greatest number obtained through a sufficient supply of clothing, food, drink, amusement and reading. But just as the friends of the masses are at variance as to how to achieve their ends, so the monarchists are very hesitant as to the precise nature of their future leader's throne. Nor do they know what he will have to do or will be unable to allow. They are not even sure of what rights they would confer upon his title. Who would succeed to the throne if such were the problems facing the Count of Chambord? The branch of Philip V? And, within this branch, would the successor be a Spanish prince or the representative of the House of Parma? 'What!' other factions would exclaim: 'And what about the Orleanist princes?' The most uncompromising royalists shake their heads, not wanting any princes of Orleans as king. The reason is quite obvious: the latter, together with their father and grandfather, had lived by revolution, and why should any pure royalist dream of revolution and hope for it with all his heart?

It seems that the most reasonable and stable section of the French population, in relation to what it wants, is that which immediately opts for a dictatorship. The future dictator has only one programme: to ensure that he dominates. Then everything becomes simple – he does what he wants, he imagines what he likes, he gives, or does not give, favours according to his wishes. No matter what euphemism he uses – like that of referring to the national will, while he is obviously its master – the fact is that he relies on force and governs by force. There is no doctrine or theory behind this: it is a concrete fact. But this is also, as for the republicans, socialists and royalists, a truly revolutionary state, for nothing lasts for ever, and

as soon as the plant is dry it falls to the ground. One could indeed reply that in falling, it distributes its seed, and that the Roman world was thus never short of a Tiberius, a Nero, an Otho, a Galba, a Vespasian, a Maximus, a Constans, a Gallus, a Valerian – and neither did it lack revolutions.

A maxim of the present time, which has been used so often that it can be considered an integral part of the workings of politics, is that a Republic causes least divisions amongst us. This argument would have some validity if those struck by the evidence for it had immediately become imbued with republican ideas, and had resolutely thrown themselves into the heart of public life. But nothing like that has happened or could happen. The monarchical parties have remained just as they were; the imperialists have gained rather than lost support; and as for the true republicans and those who have rallied to their side (we cannot say to their ideas) they all share the general characteristic of being ideologically indistinguishable from other parties. Just as the supporters of a hereditary leader play every possible variation on their different theoretical theme, so the republicans endlessly combine their systems – whether they accept or reject the superior authority of a temporary magistrate, whether they extend or limit this authority, or whether they think up complex means of accepting or refusing to be co-operative with the magistrate. Aristotle, or one of his rivals, relates somewhere that there were as many as seventy free constitutions existing in his day. There are more than seventy plans for a constitution being turned over in the minds of those Frenchmen who want a republican type of government, with the result that this section of the nation, just as completely as other sections, is seen to be utterly ineffectual ideologically – like a stretch of fine sand on which it is quite impossible ever to build a palace, a house or even a hovel.

One fact, however, may deceive the observer. Between 1871 and 1876 the establishment of a royalist monarchy was shown to be totally impossible. But nothing seemed simpler. Everyone agreed and felt it to be a proven fact that everything seemed to favour this solution. As a result, every sectarian element in the party began to try to take most credit for the anticipated success. None wanted to yield the fruits of certain victory to its rivals, and all were thus reduced to impotence, which became the cornerstone of their rivals' success. The election of M. Thiers to the National Assembly by every department well illustrates that France's inclinations after emerging from the German invasion were entirely royalist. At that time no one imagined that M. Thiers could be considered a republican leader. He was elected, on the contrary, because he had been minister under a monarchy, because he was the most ideal representative of that monarchy and because he incarnated the advanced opinion which that monarchy had produced. In choosing him the people proved that France was as it was said to have been previously – slightly left of centre; and this was as far as people wanted to go.

But France *has* gone further. Many men, often in large groups, have slowly moved over to the republican side, with a fairly clear idea of what they have done. Does this mean that they have become true republicans, resolved always to remain true to republican ideals? Is their decision based on political conviction and rational analysis? We must not suppose this, for the following reasons.

It has been the practice of the French since 1789 to join the ranks of the passing crowd but not to remain loyal to it. To avoid losing ourselves in minutely detailed research, we have only to examine the position of the Plain at the

Convention. It was the party of the disenchanted and was also the nursery which produced the substance of succeeding governments – people who had professed many different opinions and who outlived the Directory, the Empire, the Restoration, the Hundred Days and the Second Restoration and then still gave their malleable services to the July monarchy. The Plain was the party of statesmen and of the best administrators. They espoused the cause of a party with more good faith than people suppose, but were certainly not slow to admit the faults which they saw on every side. They immediately noticed them. They were no longer blind and did not want to be thought as such. They denounced these failings, and in so doing they became detached from them; thereby they took a step sideways and found themselves in the ranks of the enemy. This is why people are surprised to see the whole of France republican in 1791, consular in 1800, then devoted to the First Empire, and after that sincerely royalist for two or three years, and so on until the present day, when there is a large republican majority, following the impotence shown by the royalist parties and the state of bewilderment into which the German catastrophe has thrown the Second Empire and from which it has not yet recovered.

While the classes which are generally regarded as enlightened theorize, tentatively search for a way out of the present difficulties and ask for no more than to indicate where future success lies, the most reasonable sections of the agricultural community have adopted a different line of argument. I have gleaned the following opinion from the peasants of the Oise: 'A good subject should support the government. It was bad subjects who overthrew Louis Philippe and, later, Napoleon III. Today these bad subjects would like to make republican government im-

possible. It is thus everyone's duty to give all possible support to the Republic, for if it functions peacefully the prices of cereals, butter and livestock will again achieve the same levels that they had reached under the Empire.'

This is a strong argument and could be defended in many ways. But it must be noted that those who are persuaded by this argument willingly nominate republicans for different offices without making any attempt to discover what the latter's conception of the Republic is. We then have errors of judgment and reversals of opinion. These country people are thus kinds of conservatives (and, it must be admitted, the only serious ones that exist in France) in their desire for a society which would most favour the sale of their produce. And thus these villagers and farmers, inflexible on their property rights, and to their great surprise espoused to socialists or other sectarians of the same kind, also finally repent their political affiliations and repudiate the Republic.

As a result of these observations we must recognize as a basic truth the fact that every political theory which does, or may, exist carries with it a germ of possible realization. It is more than probable that a political theory will be put into action, and for this reason every system practised is inherently bound to die and be destroyed. The essence of France's political sensibility is thus a revolutionary instinct. No party has this instinct to a greater extent than any other: they all have it. They are all revolutionary because they all want not to improve, modify or perfect, but to destroy everything and sweep the floor clean. Some say that they want to do this in order to put the clock back five, twenty-five or a hundred years; others say they want to create a completely new society. Whatever the motive or pretext, the instinct is always the same: total destruction.

D · GLOBAL CRISIS

To Gobineau the ills of France were merely symptomatic of a much wider crisis which faced the Western world and which involved apprehensive perusal of the continents beyond. It will be recalled that the conclusion of the Essay *indicated that already by the 1850s he was filled with gloom and foreboding at the fate of civilization. In the 1870s his proposal for a second edition of the* Essay *seemed to provide an admirable opportunity for some revision of its ideas in the light of intervening study and experience. There are many indications that Gobineau prepared a considerably enlarged version, though no copy of this and only very few of the relevant notes remain. Eventually, after having difficulty in finding a publisher for a new edition, he resigned himself to changing nothing. In 1882, the last year of his life, he did, however, write a new Foreword which appeared at the head of the second edition when it finally came out in 1884. It indicates just how little in the way of change of real substance a fuller second edition might have been expected to reveal. It would probably have exhibited still more of the inflexible dogmatism and blind immunity to criticism shown by the Foreword. And no doubt it would have added others besides Darwin and Buckle to the ranks of the alleged plagiarists.*

We include an abridgement from it here, rather than in company with the main selections from the Essay, *because it so strongly implies Gobineau's continued belief in the reality of that global crisis predicted nearly thirty years before. Our final selection, part of the article* Ce qui se fait en Asie, *which was composed in 1880–81 and was published first in a German version by Richard Wagner in his* Bayreuther Blätter *for May 1881, shows that*

Gobineau was prepared to be really flexible in one direction alone – towards recognizing that in the Essay *he had much underestimated the speed of decay. We have here a paranoiac's concern with the Yellow Peril at the gates of civilization. India, Australia and America alike tremble with fear. As for Europe, she is sunk in Latin corruption and her Slavonic peoples, carrying on their ancient role as racial intermediaries, are again leaving her vulnerable to the ethnic influence of the hordes from the East. In these pages the dying Gobineau leaves us his legacy – the prophecy of racial doom and global crisis.*

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION OF THE ESSAY ON THE INEQUALITY OF THE HUMAN RACES (1882)

THIS book was first published in 1853 (vols I and II); the last two volumes (vols III and IV) appeared in 1855. The present edition has not altered a single line of the original book. In the interval much research has indeed illuminated many matters of detail, but nothing has shaken any of the essential truths which I set forth, and I have thought it necessary to maintain the truth such as I found it. People used to think very little about ethnic problems. It was vaguely thought that investigation into these matters was needed if the still unperceived basis of history was to be brought to light. People vaguely suspected that somewhere beneath this uninvestigated body of ideas and dark mysteries must lie the vast substructures on which there have gradually arisen foundations and walls, in short every social development of the multitudes which, when viewed generally, make up the variegated pattern of humanity. But no conclusions were drawn from these initial thoughts.

Since the second half of the last century, however, the study of human history has led people to claim to be able to reduce to general laws the different phenomena whose successive developments history has shown them. This new method of classifying, explaining, praising and condemning everything by means of rigorous abstract formulae led one to suspect, beneath the superficiality of events, a

force whose precise nature had still not been discovered. The prosperity or misfortunes, the greatness or decadence of a nation had for a long time been attributed to vices or virtues manifesting themselves in the particular area under discussion. An honest nation must necessarily be a great nation and, conversely, a society whose morality became too lax was led inexorably to ruin, like Susa, Athens and Rome, just as an analogous situation had led to the ultimate ruin of the discredited cities of the Dead Sea.

People thought that these keys had opened the doors of every mystery; but in fact all remained hidden. Virtues useful to great nations must be characterized by some kind of collective egoism which prevents them from being similar to so-called virtue in private individuals. The Spartan bandit and the Roman usurer were highly efficient public personalities, although morally both Lysander and Cato were very wicked people. On reflection people had to recognize this and consequently, if one praised virtue in one nation and indignantly denounced vice in another, one was obliged to admit that this was not a question of merits or demerits in the context of Christian moral conscience, but of certain aptitudes, certain vital capacities of the soul and even of the body, which determined or paralysed the development of national life. This led people to ask themselves why one nation had greater capacities than another, and thus people found they had to recognize that these differences sprang from the factor of race.

For some time people were happy with this discovery without being able to provide a more precise explanation. 'Race' was a hollow word, and no age has so contented itself with hollow phrases, or has had such a taste for them, as the present one. The kind of translucid obscurity which usually surrounds unexplained words was here projected by physiological studies. People thought that this was

sufficient, or rather, they were at least prepared to be satisfied with this state of affairs for some time to come. Moreover, they were a little afraid of what was bound to follow. It was felt that if the intrinsic worth of a nation springs from its origins, it was necessary to limit or perhaps altogether dispense with the whole notion of equality; furthermore, a great or wretched nation could no longer be praised or blamed. It would be like the relative value of gold and copper. People recoiled before such ideas.

Must it be admitted, in these days of naïve enthusiasm for equality, that such an undemocratic hierarchy could exist among men? How many dogmas, philosophical as well as religious, declared themselves ready to contest these new ideas!

During these hesitations progress was still being made, however; increasing discoveries demanded that people should recognize the truth. Geography described what it saw spread out before it; journals overflowed with new human types; ancient history was studied in greater detail; the secrets of Asia were illuminated; the American traditions became far more accessible than ever before – in short, everything indicated the importance of race. People had to resolve to examine the question on its merits ...

I then wrote the book of which this is the second edition. Since its appearance it has been widely discussed. The underlying principles were contested less than their application and, especially, their consequences. The supporters of limitless progress did not look favourably on my book. The scholar Ewald pronounced that it was of extreme Catholic inspiration; the positivist school declared it to be dangerous. But writers who are neither Catholics nor positivists but who enjoy considerable reputations have, without admitting it, surreptitiously incorporated into their work the main principles of my book and even whole

extracts from it. In short, Fallmereyer was not mistaken when he said that it was used more often and more extensively than people cared to admit.

One of the fundamental ideas behind the book is the great influence exercised by ethnic intermixture, that is, the intermingling of different races. It was the first time that this had been observed; and never before had anyone, in underlining the social consequences of this intermingling, proposed the axiom that ethnic intermixture and the human varieties produced by it were so important that they directly determined the development and decline of societies. The theory of natural selection, which Darwin and his pupils have made so famous, was based on this proposition. The system of Buckle (among others) also sprang from it; and the great difference between Buckle's ideas and my own illustrates the divergent routes taken by two opposing systems of thought which started from the same point. Death cut short Buckle's work, but the democratic flavour of his ideas has already assured him of a success which neither the rigour of his thinking nor the breadth of his knowledge justifies.

Darwin and Buckle were thus responsible for the main offshoots from my initial ideas. Many others have simply copied out extracts from my work and presented them as truths which *they* have discovered, while also indiscriminately intermingling with them the most fashionable of contemporary ideas.

I have thus made absolutely no alterations to the first edition. It is the exposition of a system, the expression of a truth which is as clear and certain to me now as it was when I first propounded it. Developments in the study of history have in no way made me change or modify my opinions. My convictions have remained totally unchanged from the beginning. Nor has the increase in

factual knowledge done anything to weaken them – I am quite happy that more factual details have come to light, for they have done nothing to change my initial observations. The testimony of experience has, to my mind, even further demonstrated the reality of racial inequality.

I admit that I might have been tempted to join in the many protests against Darwinism. Fortunately I have not forgotten that my book is not a polemical work. Its aim is to put forward an essential truth and not to point out the errors of other people – I must thus resist the temptation to be polemical. This is why I shall refrain from attacking the supposed extension of learning which, under the name of prehistoric studies, is happy simply to have created a great fuss. Exemption from knowing and above all from examining each nation's oldest documents seems the rule with these so-called investigations. It is one way to dispense with all information. There is then a complete void. People thus think they are perfectly free to fill this supposed void with whatever hypotheses suit them and can be placed in it. Then everything can be automatically controlled – by means of a special phraseology, by dividing history into Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, and substituting geological vagueness for relatively reliable chronological approximations, these 'prehistoric' researchers manage to stimulate themselves into a state of such intense excitement that they can imagine or believe anything ...

These fantasies will die a natural death. We can see this already. Ethnology needs to have its fling before becoming completely serious. There was a time quite recently when prejudice against consanguineous marriages became such that there was talk of ratifying it by law. It was thought that to marry a near cousin meant afflicting all one's children in advance with deafness and other hereditary diseases. No one seemed to realize that past generations,

while having many consanguineous marriages, never experienced the morbid consequences which are supposed to result from them. The Seleucids, Ptolemies and Incas married their sisters, but all enjoyed very good health and keen intelligence, while also being exceptionally handsome. Such conclusive and irrefutable facts, however, could convince no one, for people were wholly influenced by the fancies of a liberalism which, not liking parochial exclusiveness, was opposed to any notion of racial purity. People wanted to celebrate the union of Negro and white man as much as possible – hence the mulatto. What had to be shown to be dangerous and inadmissible was a race which only perpetuated itself through the union of its own members. After so much nonsensical talk the entirely conclusive experiments of Dr Broca destroyed this paradox for ever; and similar phantasmagoria will eventually meet the same end.

Let me again say that I have left these pages just as I wrote them when the doctrine they contain sprang from my mind, like a bird which puts its head out of the nest and looks which way to go in the limitless spaces before it. My theory stood on its own, with its weaknesses and strength, its validity and its share of mistakes, like all man's intuitive insights. It took wing and still flies on. I shall not attempt either to shorten or lengthen its wings, and even less to adjust its flight. Who could prove to me that I could direct it better today and, above all, that I would reach nearer to the truth? What I then thought to be true I still do, and consequently I have no reason to change anything. This book forms the basis of all that I have done and of all that I shall do in the future.

EVENTS IN ASIA
(1880–81)

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

What I shall endeavour to do in the following pages is to present the reader with a body of facts about the present world which, if they are valid, would seem to merit our exclusive attention and all the absorbing interest that we can bring to bear upon them ...

The modern world, even more than the Roman world and incomparably more so than the Greek world, was born with a superabundance of heterogeneous and Latin elements. This formed the basis of a particularly striking weakness. The modern world could be protected and preserved only by the coherent, logical and rational elements which it was destined to retain within it. Of these elements there has been only one of any great importance: the Germanic element. It is upon this that the modern world has thrived since its birth. Spain has retained the Germanic element in the north, in the Asturias, Galicia, part of Aragon, and to a small extent in the two Castiles. It has thrived on it, for with its aid it has kept a firm hold on its liberty – having exhausted itself for centuries in its efforts to shake off Arab domination, Spain finally achieved victory over the Moors and rid itself of them.

Italy owed to the Normans of Sicily its ability to receive the Hohenstauffen with open arms, and it was to them that it owed its brilliance and greatness. But it was very small in size. The strength of the peninsula originated in the north – in Piedmont and the mountains of the Maurienne and

Savoy, where the Swedish tribes were dominant, and especially in Lombardy. If we watch progressive Lombard incursions into Tuscany and the Romagna, as well as into the area of Milan, we can see the development of almost the entire strength of Italy during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It was to Germanic blood, and to it alone, that this great haven of the seafaring nations owed its prosperity.

In France, while the kingdom was governed by the northern provinces until the arrival of the Bourbon dynasty from the south, the situation was very similar. After this phase, towards the middle of the seventeenth century, the cluckings of the liberals began everywhere. In the eighteenth century the liberals overran all countries – the north no longer had any authority, everywhere people hesitated between absolutism of the sovereign and absolutism of the masses, and the Germanic genius was smothered by sheer weight of numbers. Germany fared no better. It had seemed to be the absolutely secure possession of the governing race. But, as the very consequence of this race's extent, this impression proved to be false. From the fifth century onwards, and especially during the seventh and eighth centuries, the incursions of Rome extended the possessions of the Latin element far into the north; and all the southern parts of the country were gradually taken over by this racial mixture ...

The entire structure of present-day Europe, even including Norway and Sweden, thus contains an enormous quantity of Latin blood. Until the seventeenth century England had to a certain extent been protected from it. But the religious wars and political revolutions in France put an end to that, for they sent into England more than a hundred and fifty thousand heads of family of mixed race, and during the closing years of the eighteenth century the

needs of modern industry even further adulterated the essentially Anglo-Saxon and Norman elements of the country. Very considerable trading in Celtic produce resulted in such a great influx of Irish and Welsh immigrants that, in recent times, England has been obliged to open its Parliament to the Latin hordes. Whereas England had only recently been the most Germanic of powers, it now began to preach and put into practice the notions, ideas, absurdities, weaknesses, in short the confusion so fundamental to the Latin world. This has been evident ever since. Europe then became more and more what we have henceforth believed it to be. Its physiognomy and actions are wholly Latin. All its nations want to anticipate ceaseless revolutions and change; they all repeat the same words and doctrines with an ecstatic enthusiasm that is not always in the best of faith; they all want to exchange overnight what they already know for what they do not, what they have for what they have not; they all like or value things only in an arbitrary fashion; all are Latin and consider themselves superior to all the generations which governed the world before them, as if they had arrived at the pinnacle of the most refined of civilizations. In short, we must once again say that they are all Latin, for in every country the majority of people are Latin or semi-Latin.

There is much that is Slavonic in this Latin element. There is no doubt that, whether Slav or latinized, none of the great European centres of population of today still belong to the historic Germanic peoples, founders of society, some of whose names we still remember but whose principles are gladly cast aside and whose instincts are denied. The reality of this change in outlook is so evident that, if we are to define the mentality of the European masses at the present time, we must admit that the fifth

century of the Christian era – an age of transition – means nothing to them; that, from their viewpoint, the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth centuries did not toil or suffer to build them a new framework; that the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries produced no opinions, disseminated no ideas, founded absolutely nothing which they regret or which could ever have appealed to them; that the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did not begin to destroy what did appeal to them; that, in their eyes, the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not exist in the ruins solely to procure the disappearance of what they no longer desired; and that, all things considered, the nineteenth century has immediately succeeded the fourth century for the Latin mentality which dominates the modern world, and it is doing its best to restore the moral degeneration and political ruin which constitute the very essence of the Latin race.

Having done its best to institute a revolutionary system in every country of the Old World, the Latin race turned its energies towards destroying every vital possibility in the South American world. It produced a constellation of colonies detached from their mother country and deprived of any sense of purpose. But these colonies were distant from the mainstream of European life; the Latin canker had to be brought nearer home. The Latins then concentrated on creating a massive conflagration at the very heart of ancient European civilization. Greece was made to rise up in revolt. Modern Greece was not aware that Athens and Sparta had ever existed and neither did it care; it dreamt – and still dreams – only of the splendours of Byzantium, and has always only wanted Constantinople as its capital and the empire of the Palaeologi as its universe. It was thrown into the political arena – ruined,

starving and so constituted as never to be able to achieve a state of rest or calm, the whole country being periodically excited into a state of unrest. Greece may be pushed to any extreme by the present talk of handing over to it Thessaly, Macedonia and Epirus – it is thus promised what it will never have. Meanwhile, Rumelia has been made into two states neither of which can survive; Serbia, Bosnia and Rumania (itself rotten even before birth) have been joined on to these two states; and we are assured that Constantinople will keep possession of Thrace, in the middle of which it has been abandoned but which it can neither control nor repudiate. This part of the world has become a centre of deep unrest and constant upheaval. Asian Turkey, whose people have never been either able or willing to accept Ottoman military domination, feeds on a permanent will to revolt, while Persia's religious faith makes it wish for Turkey's destruction. We are also told that England will save Turkey on account of Crete. This struggle is flagrantly waged and is sometimes quite unchecked. Its existence is sometimes denied only in areas no longer held by any side and which nothing can pacify – and people go on repeating that this permanent crisis will be overcome without too much difficulty.

The whole of Europe surveys the present unrest. England, France, Germany, Italy, and all those states which produced this unrest, which have nurtured it for the past sixty years and have brought it to its present stage of development, claim that they are resolved to advance no further along this dangerous path. They declare that things will become no worse and that they will be able to save the situation. People admit that Europe, having undergone such profound changes, has no alternative but to devote itself to the task of ensuring peace and stability; that England, which has just aggravated the madness of the

Irish almost to the point of frenzy, has its hands free for the task; that France, in its present state, can put an end to all these mad ventures; that Germany has no other distractions; that Italy is entirely suited to the role of keeper of the peace; that Austria has the will, strength, capacity and composure to be a peace keeper as well. Russia, spread over the whole of eastern Europe, is said to be essentially composed of all those instincts which must prevent it from seizing Constantinople. Yet everyone in Russia hankers after Constantinople – from the soldier who dreams of glory and wealth to the peasant who dreams of nothing, but whose religious faith makes him frenzied ...

The Russian desire to possess Constantinople is not an expression of political greed, but an axiomatic element of religious faith. Neither in Moscow nor in St Petersburg does this desire have to be authorized by any worldly authority. The very stones in the earth cry out that they should be placed in the pavements of Constantinople. No political theorist in Russia has the power to refuse the entire Russian people the opportunity of satisfying their most heartfelt desire. I do not know what the Tsar's opinion is. I have no doubt that the matter is debated light-heartedly by politicians who were educated, and whose attitudes were formed, in the West. But the whole nation, all whose sympathies lie with the Orthodox country, all that is Slav, and all who live and breathe only for the triumph of Russia, want her to possess Constantinople. Slavs and Asian Christians desire this so passionately and fervently that, even if future negotiators deferred the seizure of Constantinople for several months, or even years (though I doubt it), this would mean nothing to the Russians. For no matter how valid the negotiators' reasoning might be, they could only uselessly defer the

most inevitable of the historical events which are now bearing down upon us ...

* * *

Until 1830 people discussed Asia almost exclusively from the point of view of India. The rest was virtually forgotten in Europe – people knew absolutely nothing about it and nothing attracted their attention or interest to it. The remainder of Asia was an abstract geographical concept and no one imagined that we could ever be concretely affected by it. Around 1840 this situation very gradually began to alter. Events in China aroused the attention of Europe. People conceived the idea that vast commercial interests were at stake in these distant parts. The English had just suffered considerable defeats in Afghanistan. The fact that there existed Afghans who could defeat the English was a source of great amazement. A city of Herat was discovered, and the French parliament found this so curious that it condescended to make it the subject of a solemn debate ...

England's attitude towards Asia was maturing, but only very gradually. No one imagined that Asia was worth serious consideration, and even now only very few people believe that it *could* merit such attention. It is said that people in other countries will not take account of developments in Asia for many years. This may be so, but since 1863 the situation has already considerably altered. France and England have conducted a war in China which has taught them a great deal, especially that the Chinese fight well and could make excellent soldiers.

There is no doubt that, in whatever manner the Anglo-French campaign was conducted, the results would have been lamentable if it had been assisted by the revolt of

indigenous troops. Since then, other signs have given cause for reflection on the present position of the Asiatics. Loud cries of horror have arisen in the United States. The Americans have declared in Congress that they have been invaded by Chinese immigrants and that their own workers and labourers cannot compete with this new challenge, for the Chinese are more energetic, hardworking, sober and (they had to admit) more honest than their own countrymen. Fear of the Chinese has reached such proportions that it has been suggested that they should be driven from California by force, there being no other way to overcome the invasion. A similar fear has existed in the Dutch colony of Java for many years; it has now even penetrated into the heart of Australia. In all these countries the Chinaman – though far from his native China – has become an object of horror and fear, because people do not know how to answer the industry, applications, persistence and, ultimately, the unparalleled cheapness of his labour. These are the concrete reasons why we now know that the Chinese are to be feared ...

2. THE PRESENT PERIL

England is now more worried and afraid about the fate of India than ever before, and now on more rational grounds. Perhaps England is justified, perhaps not. India is a vast country which can either destroy or defend and save itself. Whether India would be prepared to do the latter is a delicate question, and it would be rash to say that it would. I shall not risk a prediction. India *may* wish (it would be bold to claim it would not) to hazard its fortune on its own. But, in this complex of thorny problems thrust upon us by the present situation in Asia, there is more to

occupy our attention than the fate of India. A further consideration of the problem would enable us to see this more clearly.

I said above that the Americans fear the Chinese invasion, from which not even the Pacific can protect them. The same situation exists in Australia, and it gives rise to the same hatreds. England, while fearing Russian incursions into India, is also afraid at the sight of India's eastern provinces (those next to Burma, together with the whole region skirting them in the north-west, like Tibet and Ladakh) being swamped by Chinese immigrants. This situation reflects that in California and the Australian colonies, but Chinese immigration into India will have more far-reaching consequences, is on a larger scale and is effected more easily because of geographical proximity and the accessibility of land routes. At the same time the most important development in Central Asia of recent years has been persistent Chinese efforts to exterminate and eradicate all Moslem peoples from their empire and from neighbouring areas. This great undertaking is the prime preoccupation of the Peking government, now suddenly passionately aroused after centuries of total indifference. China's sudden awakening seems doubly irrational when it occurs at the very moment when China must recognize, respect and even protect Christianity. China's actions are motivated neither by anger, nor by offended and uncompromising religious faith, nor by fanaticism. The bloodthirsty rage of the Chinese, obsessed with slaughtering and eradicating the Moslems, is explained simply by thoughts of commercial gain, and self-interest alone is the main motivating factor ...

The Chinese have the following vital reasons for hating the Moslems – while the Chinese are hungry, the Moslems contest their right to the insufficient supply of food available;

the Moslems are rebels or can be at any moment; finally, the Moslems are the natural allies of the West. The most manifest proof of this is that the Moslems are entirely subservient to Russia. This may seem strange, but it is an undeniable fact. The Russians, whom the Moslems of European Turkey have every right to consider their irreconcilable enemies, are invariably regarded by the Moslems of Central Asia as friends and comrades-at-arms ... To complete the picture, Russia regards all inhabitants of her territory not only as subjects, but as subjects from among whom she may choose her own officials. She thus appoints Moslems to be colonels, generals and administrators. The Russians do not regard the Moslems simply as conquered subjects, but as fellow-citizens to be treated with the same respect as Christians and able to enjoy privileges identical to those enjoyed by the German Russians of the Baltic provinces. If we picture the Tartar or Moslem general or colonel peacefully making his pilgrimage to Mecca under the protection of the consuls of the empire, and imagine what he must think of the miserable English sepoys whose highest dream in life could only be to reach the rank of lieutenant, we can immediately see why the Russians are so popular with the Asiatics. The Russians are Asiatics themselves and thus do not offend the Asiatics' interests, pride or innermost feelings, whereas the English cannot avoid doing so.

The Russians are certainly a European nation when seen in the European context, but since we are now discussing their position in Asia, let us consider them – despite their seventy million Slavs – as a nation which extends as far as Kashgar. Through many recent territorial gains, such as the annexation of Turkestan, Russia is now connected to the western provinces. It has also been able to penetrate into western China for several years by means of the

river Amur, of which it has assumed complete possession. What Russia has thought particularly necessary for some years is to ensure that it has some knowledge of those routes which, in all these regions, lead from the Middle Eastern Empire to Russia and from Russia to China. To gain this information Russia successfully used a certain number of Polish agents. The English, worried and agitated by the gathering of Chinese close to India, wanted to discover the same information. But since they pride themselves on proving that they use no English observers from the Caspian to the farther frontiers of Tibet, they contented themselves with using Hindus educated in English schools and thus achieved less satisfactory and reliable results than the Russians' Polish agents. But in any case these inquiries have for many years produced immensely important results. When we recall how inadequate knowledge of Asia had been since the time of Marco Polo, the present state of affairs (only a period of transition, certainly not a halt in Asian investigations) must be considered with the greatest interest.

If at the same time we also consider the area round the Caspian Sea – now become Russian and henceforth surrounded on both east and west by Russian provinces – we are struck by the sight of two great building operations which are completing in a singular way the topographical works undertaken on the Chinese border. A railway line is being laid from Orenburg towards Kashgar, while at the same time building works are being used in an effort to redirect the course of the Oxus, making it follow routes which are either identical or similar to those which the river followed in the early Middle Ages and in antiquity. The result of these developments will necessarily be to restore to their former fertility regions which have become artificially sterile, and consequently to reopen the old

invasion routes which successively brought into Europe every race which rushed headlong from Central or Western Asia.

Whether we care to recall the most ancient migratory movements – of Slavs, Celts, Germans or Huns – or simply restrict our attention to the Hungarians, Turks, Mongols or Tartars of Tamburlaine, it is evident that the route history has taken is being reopened. It is again opened in and around China, where we can already see the masses on the move. We may well tremble at the danger which threatens us. I am not very impressed by the manner in which Russia presides over this whole task of building and gathering information. I am more than doubtful as to whether Russia resolutely wants the fulfilment of all that such efforts imply; and although the English, viewing the situation from the mountains of India and endowed with a vivid imagination, denounce the orders, advice and suggestions of St Petersburg, saying that it is these which have created the present menacing situation, there are to my mind many growing developments in Asia which are politically unforeseen. I think that most Russian statesmen are influenced far more by what happens in London, Berlin and Paris than by any interesting discovery a Polish engineer may confide to the governor of Tashkent.

Nor am I stimulated by the question of whether the Russian Empire will take over the whole of Asia and India. But my attention *is* seized by the rapidly growing dangers in Asia, which are certainly going to explode on Europe. I am struck by the amazing speed with which these dangers grow and develop; I think it quite possible that within ten years the face of the world will be on the point of changing. When I see so much rapid movement and upheaval in the East, I do not consider any less strange the rapid decline and spreading torpor in the whole Western world. I fore-

saw and predicted these strange phenomena a number of years ago in my book, *The Inequality of the Human Races*. But I must admit that I did not then expect these things to come about so quickly. I can thus only revise my opinion and admit that the world is more mutable than I thought and that the advanced state of the intermixture of races should have made me suspect the speed with which it would push the present perils to their logical conclusion. This is what we are now going to see happen – with all the violence, upheaval and misery that this will inevitably entail.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

These notes on further reading are designed to indicate some of the major primary and secondary sources for the more detailed study of Gobineau's life and thought. Comparatively little is available in English and, though translations are mentioned whenever possible, the serious student of Gobineau must be prepared to undertake the bulk of his reading in French and, to some degree, in German. In the case of recent works which are likely to be still in print the name of the publisher has been indicated.

The complete text of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* is now at last easily available due to its republication under the editorship of Hubert Juin (Belfond, Paris 1967). *Les Pléiades* can be read in a convenient Livre de Poche edition (Paris 1960) or in the Oxford Library of French Classics under the title *Sons of Kings* (tr. D. Parmée, London 1966). There is an admirable edition of the complete text of *La Renaissance* prepared by Jean Mistler (Monaco 1947). The English translation is available only in two separate parts: the dialogues, as *The Renaissance* (ed. O. Levy, New York 1913), and Gobineau's prose commentary upon them, as *The Golden Flower* (ed. Ben Ray Redman, London 1924). Ludwig Schemann edited the French texts of *Ce qui est arrivé à la France en 1870* and *La Troisième République Française et ce qu'elle vaut* as two of the only four volumes completed in his projected *Nachgelassene Schriften des Grafen Gobineau* (Strassburg 1907–8). *Ce qui se fait en Asie* and *L'Instinct Révolutionnaire en France* were brought together by Cahiers Libres (Paris 1928). The first French publication of the former was in the *Revue du Monde Latin*, vol. 6, 1885, pp. 397–418.

Of Gobineau's works unrepresented in the present volume the following are the most significant. The *Histoire des Perses* (2 vols., Paris 1869) and the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl, Pirate*

Norvégien (Paris 1879) represent his further forays into historical fields. His travels produced most notably *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (Paris 1865: republished by Gallimard, Paris 1957), *Trois Ans en Asie* (Paris 1859) and *Voyage à Terre-Neuve* (Paris 1861). Three novelettes inspired by his experience of Greece and Newfoundland were published as *Souvenirs de Voyage* (Paris 1872). These are now available, together with some other works of fiction, in Jean Gaulmier's admirable edition, *Le Mouchoir Rouge et Autres Nouvelles* (Garnier, Paris 1968). He has also edited for Garnier Gobineau's *Nouvelles Asiatiques* (1965). No bibliography on Gobineau would be complete without some reference to his crude versifying. P. Berselli Ambri has brought together some of his *Poemi Inediti* in the collection *Biblioteca dell' 'Archivum Romanicum'*, vol. 75 (Firenze 1965). This includes the early and important poem *Manfredine*. The implications of the elite morality receive bombastic emphasis in the epic poem *Amadis* (Paris 1887). But the text there presented was the result of editorial toning down by his sister and the Comtesse de La Tour, and it should be read in conjunction with the account of the expurgation given in Rahel Thenen's article, 'Le Testament Spirituel de Gobineau', *Études Gobiniennes*, no. 1, 1966, pp. 217–37. As for Gobineau's articles, the most relevant are the contributions to his own monthly, *La Revue Provinciale* (1848–9), and to *Le Correspondant*. The work published in the latter is as follows: 'L'Émigration Européenne dans les Deux Amériques', Oct. 25th, 1872, vol. 89, pp. 208–42; 'L'Instruction Primaire en Suède', Feb. 25th, 1873, vol. 90, pp. 659–83; 'L'Émigration au Brésil', July 25th, 1874, vol. 96, pp. 352–76; 'Le Royaume des Hellènes', (I) May 10th, 1878, vol. 111, pp. 416–41, (II) July 10th, 1878, vol. 112, pp. 30–60, (III) Aug. 25th, 1878, vol. 112, pp. 668–99, (IV) Nov. 10th, 1878, vol. 113, pp. 471–504. These last four articles were later collected and published as the major part of *Deux Études sur la Grèce Moderne* (Paris 1905).

Gobineau's voluminous correspondence is well worthy of study. Among the many collections the following should be mentioned in particular: *Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et d'Arthur de Gobineau* (ed. M. Degros, Gallimard, Paris 1959);

the letters to his sister edited by A. B. Duff contained in *Lettres Persanes* (Paris 1957) and in *Correspondance de Gobineau avec Mère Bénédicte, 1872–82* (Mercure de France, 2 vols., Paris 1958); the unreliable but, for the present, useful edition by Clement Serpeille de Gobineau, *Correspondance entre le Comte de Gobineau et le Comte de Prokesch-Osten, 1854–76* (Paris 1933); the *Lettres d'Arthur de Gobineau au Comte de Circourt* (ed. J. Gaulmier), in *Études Gobiniennes*, no. 1, 1966, pp. 103–38, and no. 2, 1967, pp. 63–106; the *Briefwechsel Gobineaus mit Adalbert von Keller* (ed. L. Schemann) in the *Nachgelassene Schriften* (Strassburg 1911); and, finally, the letters to the Emperor of Brazil in *Dom Pedro II e o Conde de Gobineau: Correspondencias Ineditas* (ed. G. Raeders, São Paulo 1938). In common with the others the two last editions mentioned, their titles notwithstanding, provide French texts.

Any detailed study of Gobineau's social and political thinking could neglect neither the generous manuscript sources at the Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, Strasbourg, nor his diplomatic reports conserved at the Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris.

Among secondary sources the pioneering works of Ludwig Schemann, despite their frequently hagiographic and uncritical tone, remain of great value. The chief relevant books are *Gobineau: eine Biographie* (2 vols., Strassburg 1913–16), *Quellen und Untersuchungen zum Leben Gobineaus* (2 vols., Strassburg 1914, Berlin 1919) and *Gobineaus Rassenwerk: Aktenstücke und Betrachtungen zur Geschichte des 'Essai'* (Stuttgart 1910). The earliest temperate studies are represented by such works as E. Seillière, *Gobineau et l'Aryanisme Historique* (Paris 1903) and R. Dreyfus, *La Vie et les Prophéties du Comte de Gobineau* (Paris 1905). M. Lange, *Gobineau: Étude Biographique et Critique* (Strasbourg 1924) is quite valuable, although much marred by its French chauvinism. Between the wars there were two works by American authors, but both must be used with particular caution: A. H. Rowbotham, *The Literary Works of Count de Gobineau* (Paris 1929) and G. M. Spring, *The Vitalism of Count Gobineau* (New York 1932).

The inauguration in 1966 of the annual, *Études Gobiniennes*

(ed. A. B. Duff and J. Gaulmier, Klincksieck, Paris), is a symptom of renewed and active interest in the study of Gobineau. Recent scholarship has produced what is now the best general introductory work, Jean Gaulmier's *Spectre de Gobineau* (Pauvert, Paris 1965), as well as an exhaustive treatment of the early years in Janine Buenzod, *La Formation de la Pensée de Gobineau* (Nizet, Paris 1967). The present editor's forthcoming book, *The Racist Ideology of Count Gobineau* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1970), will aim to provide a coherent account of the social and political thought of its subject.

Some idea of Gobineau's influence upon later racist thinking can be gained from sources such as the following: *Bayreuther Blätter* (issues for 1881–2, and May 1886); E. Seillière, 'La Religion Impérialiste — I, II', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Dec. 1st, 1903, pp. 642–72, and Dec. 15th, 1903, pp. 860–82; W. Schallmayer, 'Gobineaus Rassenwerk und die moderne Gobineauschule', *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft*, 1910, pp. 553–72; E. Riebe, *Gobineau im Lichte der heutigen Rassenhygiene* (Hannover 1926); and the extraordinary work of Camille Spiess, exemplified in *Impérialismes: la Conception Gobinienne de la Race, sa Valeur au point de vue biopsychologique* (Genève 1917). The two studies of Manfred Steinkühler, *Gobineau au Jugement de ses Contemporains d'Outre-Rhin* (1961) and *L' 'Essai' dans l'Enseignement du Troisième Reich* (1961), are of great interest and are available in typescript at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. The latest example of Gobineau's use and influence is Charles Fouqué's *Défense et Illustration de la Race Blanche: à la Mémoir du Comte de Gobineau* (Lyon 1958) in which he becomes the advocate of European unity against the coloured hordes of Afro-Asia.

Finally, it is relevant to point out that useful introductory accounts of racist theories will be found in J. Barzun, *Race: a Study in Superstition* (revised ed., Harper, New York 1965), L. L. Snyder, *The Idea of Racialism* (Anvil Books, Princeton 1962), and M. Banton, *Race Relations*, ch. 2 (Tavistock, London 1967). In 'Gobineau and the Origins of European Racism', *Race: Journal of the Institute of Race Relations*, vol. 7, no. 3, Jan. 1966, pp. 255–70, the editor of the present selection has

attempted to assess Gobineau's own particular contribution to the early evolution of such ideas. His further article, 'The Intellectualization of Prejudice: Race and Political Theory', *Alta: the University of Birmingham Review*, no. 4, Winter 1967–8, pp. 179–84, suggests some of the issues involved in considering any theory of history, society and politics having for its foundation the dogma of racial inequality.

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